

**Paul Berthoud**

**A Professional Life Narrative  
And Some Related Stories**



A Professional Life Narrative And Some Related Stories by  
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# Foreword

Occasionally towards the end of my professional life, and more often since retirement, I have been at times asked whether I was writing my memoirs. My not always entirely sincerely modest reply generally was that I did not think that I had lived moments important enough to warrant being recorded, I also often made the point that an intention to do so would have required at least in some instances the keeping of appropriate records or references, which I had never done. Two instances occurred, however, which have ended up raising in my mind the question of putting on record some aspects and specific events of my life span.

Firstly, AFICS-NY, the New York-based Association of Former International Civil Servants, in the late 1990s launched a project titled "Remembering the United Nations". It asked its members to make an effort and concisely record some of the most striking moments of their professional careers. The call was not for life stories, but for "vignettes", snapshots of events that had stuck in their memory. Stimulated by the challenge, I ended up producing a number of short texts under the title of "A mini-chronicle of United Nations experience" This was in no way meant to be read as memoirs, but as a collection of episodes in my professional life at the United Nations. My contribution was published by AFICS-NY in 2000 as part of a larger volume.

Secondly, at about the same time I was approached by the United Nations Intellectual History Project (UNIHP) and invited to be interviewed by them. We spent two full mornings

talking about the concerns of their field of investigation. As part of their research on the birth and development of ideas within the United Nations, UNHIP was interested in the background and personality of the senior staff and former staff they interviewed. They also endeavoured to understand the elements that shaped their career stream and their thinking. This was thus for me a much more encompassing venture than the AFICS-NY experience, In addition to providing the materials representing the substance of the book "UN VOICES" published by UNHIP, the full text of the 79 individual interviews were issued by the Project in the Spring of 2007 as a CD-ROM under the title "The Complete Oral History Transcripts From UN Voices".

It is when having in hand that CD-ROM that the idea first occurred to me that put together, those two sources of information may possibly provide the elements of what I then thought might perhaps best be described as mini-memoirs. A number of basic questions immediately arose in my mind about such an idea. The first naturally was that of the target audience. Except for my immediate family, who would ever be interested in this story? And to the family it would not bring anything they would not already have known. Importantly, this would be essentially a United Nations-based and United Nations-driven project, and in the English language at that ! Then how much time would I be prepared to devote to such a project ? Very conscious of the aphorism according to which the written word is to be read and the spoken word is to be heard, I visualized the vast amount of editorial work that would have to be undertaken to bring my statements in the UNHIP interview in consonance with my narratives in the AFICS-NY piece.

This last negative consideration has turned out, however, to be a trap: I basically like drafting and editing, and far from rebuking me, the idea of the task involved rather attracted me. It could be performed by building bridges between the pieces of the patchwork through the drafting texts that would ensure some continuity in the narrative. Thus did an idea germinate and evolve into a project. The prospect of embarking upon such an activity very much appealed to me. I had definitively disengaged from collaboration with the Tribune de Genève, I felt to be in a position to give sufficient time to this project of a narrative. The basic question, however, remained unanswered: for what purpose should I produce such a document ? If there is no prospect of a potential audience to sustain the effort, will it be workable ? The reply could only be subjective and highly irrational. In deciding to enter the ring, I limited myself to begging for the patronage of Cyrano de Bergerac: C'est encore bien plus beau, lorsque c'est inutile!

Initially my intention would have been to call this paper "Mini-memoirs". I was not sufficiently attentive to the fact that the vocable Memoirs apparently evokes the idea of the presentation of a life story. This is not what the present paper is about. The preceding paragraphs clearly describe the origin and the basic ingredients of this venture, i.e., combining the elements of two sources of information existing in the United Nations about my involvement in the Organization's affairs. Notwithstanding the texts I added to bridge gaps and complete the story, it is basically my life as it unfolded in that context that it traces. The result is a selective and highly subjective narrative, concentrating on matters in which I was interested

and with no pretension to objectivity. If it starts by dealing with my childhood and youth and the milieu in which I grew up, it is, as indicated above, because the second of those United Nations sources paid considerable attention to the question of the background and personality of the people it interviewed. It being so, this paper presents only part of my life story. It leaves out a number of facts or events which may have been important for me but were not related to my professional life. It also fails to give its proper place as a constant reality to the contribution of my wife, who has accompanied me and stood at my side throughout my professional life.

As I started to write, however, the idea of a broader frame of reference for this venture haunted my mind. While the United Nations was to be the backbone of my paper, I thought I could perhaps add elements that might hopefully enlarge the scope of my story. In addition to digging from my memory, would we perhaps still have, for instance, stacked somewhere in our household, some past correspondence or other papers that might be consulted ? Could I thus activate that memory and give a fresh touch to events that would be worth referring to ? I finally came to the conclusion that while fully worth pursuing, such a broader approach should be kept as a separate project. I should first give shape to the professional life narrative based on the two United Nations contributions. There was nothing morbid, but only realism, that led me to that decision. At my age, to rule out entirely the risk of sudden brain stroke or heart failure would be unreasonable, and I disliked the idea of passing away leaving behind in the computer a messy unfinished piece of work.

My intention is thus to go on writing about my past and that of my family. There are now in my room four boxes of old papers, and it will be a pêche miraculeuse, in which as one knows one sometimes catches nothing. I would intend to proceed with the writing of self-contained little stories at the whims of the material I discover or the thoughts my brain entertains. Most of those stories would be descriptive, some might be anecdotal, some political, some in French. I would intend to place them in what I would like to call an album. Linguists will point out that an album is a collection of images, stamps or recordings, and not of texts, but I like the word in this context. At the beginning, the album would be a hotchpotch. After a while, it could be organized in categories of subjects. At some later point, it might perhaps be worth looking to see whether some of those stories fit into my United Nations based narrative, and - improbably - deserve the preparation of a revised version of that text. In any case, the album would be ultimately the companion piece of the present narrative.

# **I. In Switzerland**

## **1. The family**

I was born on 4 May 1922 in a language-mixed Swiss family. My mother was from the German side of the country. My father grew up in a French-speaking family in Bienne, which is a typically bilingual city at the frontier of languages. His father headed a small factory involved in the watch industry. The family enterprise had run into serious trouble since World War One because my grandfather, so I was told, had refused to adjust production to meet military weapons requirements. My father graduated from the Zurich Federal Polytechnic. He was an agricultural engineer, and after holding a job with the Etat de Vaud, he settled in the Agricultural Department in the cantonal Government in Geneva. While his family was from the canton of Neuchâtel, he then acquired the citizenship of Geneva. This was before I was born. I was therefore born a Genevese. Later on in my career, this very often provoked raised eyebrows on the part of people who had been working in Geneva for a long time but had never met a real Genevois, which I am because I was born as such. My mother was from a mountain farmer family in the Berner Oberland. It was a close family and as a kid I spent most of my vacations in a small mountain farm setting with relatives on my mother's side. Both families were rather large. My father was the eldest of eight, my mother the fifth of nine children. That made for a lot of aunts, uncles and cousins.

## 2. Early perceptions

Now, I think it fair to say that I am very much a product of Geneva as it developed in the 1920s and the 1930s. As I used to say, the League of Nations and I grew together. My father was very interested in politics and international affairs, and he followed developments world-wide. I should add that there was a special international angle in my family. My father had a cousin who had married a Chinese, Chan Choung Sing, who was one of the close collaborators of Albert Thomas, the first Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and lived in Geneva at the time. Therefore, the dimension of cultural diversity, of the existence of another world outside of, and very different from, our little world in Geneva, was very much alive in my own family. As a consequence, I became soon very interested in what was happening in the League of Nations. I should add that we had two daily newspapers at home : *Le Journal de Genève*, which was a very good solidly conservative paper, and *Le Travail*, which was the daily of the Geneva Socialist Party, then a very leftist wing of the socialist movement in Switzerland. My father since I started to read, told me "You have to read both, because you cannot rely on only one view of the world. it is much too complicated." So we had those two violently antagonistic sources of information coming into our home every day. I should add that though very progressive in many respects, my father was an active member of the *Parti Radical suisse*, as a representative of which he even held office at the municipal level. This was a formation at the centre-right of the political spectrum constantly allied with the rightist parties, though it had been in the Nineteenth Century an important progressive force of the *Kulturkampf* in shaping in Switzerland the liberal secular modern State. This made me more than once

in later life tell my father that he was a Radical de 1848.

One of the reminiscences I have from those early years is when the Chinese-Japanese conflict broke out. The Manchukuo affair, the attack on Shanghai, in the Fall of 1931 and in 1932, naturally deeply affected my family. In school also, as ten years old kids, we were very much involved in that conflict, to the point where we were playing League of Nations during recess. We had a cardboard on which we had put CD (corps diplomatique) as a license plate; we tucked it to our belt and we were driving to our virtual Assembly Hall during recess, in a corner of the courtyard, and started to hotly argue the Chinese-Japanese War. We felt that this was a situation in which we wanted to be a part.

Another very clear recollection of mine is of the day three years later, in 1935, on which I skipped school to go to the railway station in Geneva to applaud Haile Selassie when he came to the League of Nations to defend his case after Mussolini had invaded Ethiopia. A few of us in our class felt it was important to show him some sympathy. I remember so well the then Emperor, that short man in his wide brown cape walking down the underpass at Cornavin. We were quite absorbed by the importance of the moment. It turned out to be a momentous event in the history of the League and of Geneva because it brought national politics close to international politics.. A bunch of Italian journalists in the public gallery of the League's Assembly Hall interfered by shouting insults and created chaos in the meeting when Haile Selassie took the floor. The authorities of Geneva proceeded to arrest those journalists. There was however immediately an Intervention by

the Federal Government in Berne which gave an injunction to the Geneva authorities to set them free. One should remember that this was during the only three years during which Geneva had a socialist government, 1933 to 1936, and relations with Berne were tense anyway. It was revealing, however, of the benevolent-toward-fascism atmosphere which reigned at that time in the Federal Government.

Then we were emotionally very much involved, from 1936 on, in the Spanish Civil War. True to his intellectual honesty which importantly entailed respect for legitimacy, my father never wavered in his support of the Republican side. Passions were riding high at the time and most of us teenagers were embroiled in and out of school in endless discussions, often highly confrontational. We drew the red-yellow-violet colours of the Republican flag on our notebooks, and the AER (Amis de l'Espagne Républicaine) logo was our rallying symbol. Everything has been said about this dramatic prelude to World War Two. Reflecting later in life about the major elements that had had an impact on who I had become, I have come to the conclusion that the Spanish Civil War probably had been for me a more important event than even the World War itself. And I know that I am not the only one in my generation who had had this experience.

I would not wish to close this chapter without having a word about my mother. Reading the first pages of this story, one realizes that my father was for me in my youth an important person, while my mother is never mentioned. This illustrates the danger of the distortions that might result from taking as a life story a paper the purpose of which is more limited, in this

case to professional life. In point of fact, almost all allusions to my father in my paper are made in the political context which I attempted to outline as relevant to the background of my career. We were, he and I, indeed close in that respect, and we had a good father / son relationship generally. But thinking back to my childhood and youth as a whole, the fact is that I have been at all times closer to my mother than to my father. Except for those famous fifty centimes he gave me that day in primary school when I brought back a particularly disastrous report - a very efficient way of putting me to shame, I can hardly think of an event or incident during my school days and the course of my studies in which he would have been involved. I don't think my father was too concerned about my school performance. Maybe my overall score was such that he simply did trust me and thought he did not have to worry. He was always so involved in his YMCA leadership activities that our feeling often was that he had little time left for family affairs. My mother was much more concerned with the course of my studies. It was she, after all, not my father, who was present when I presented my doctorate thesis. That it be health or sentimental life, worries at school or the planning of holidays, It was my mother who was there in the first instance, to whom I confided or who did have to intervene to put forward a parental viewpoint, this from early childhood to and through my university years. The point is that my story is not a description of my life overall, and its limitations may distort reality.

### **3. Studies**

This was the climate in which I grew up, and I was certainly

very much influenced by what Geneva was and what Wilson wanted it to be, as the seat of the League of Nations. I engaged in classical studies, seven years of Latin and four years of ancient Greek. I had only German as a foreign language. I thus reached the baccalaureat, or the maturité as the Swiss so nicely call it, without having had a single hour of English at school. But I had a solid background in humanities. As my studies proceeded, I became more and more Interested in the various aspects of international cooperation. I decided to study law, with very much a specific interest in international law, and particularly international organizations.

From the Summer of 1942 on, my studies were to be reconciled with the periods of military service which I had to serve as a Swiss citizen. This was for three years a sometimes difficult game : advancing or delaying periods of army duty in order to squeeze in examinations, or inversely playing with the dates of university examinations to be able to meet terms imposed by the army. On my military experience I have nothing to say. The army and I never understood each other, and our relations were at all times at best indifferent, sometimes hostile. I consequently succeeded in escaping the trap of the patriotic duty and responsibility of the intellectual to provide leadership, and I was not asked at any time to enter the additional training required for becoming an officer.

After graduating with a licence en droit, I decided to engage in the preparation of a Doctorat. I was at the same time pursuing studies in political science, which then was really not much more than an amount of economics and of history added to law to make it sound like another science. In Europe, the doctorat

was a particularly ill-defined concept. In German universities, the title was given to indicate the successful completion of law studies. In France, it rewarded a so-called *thèse de doctorat*, an important piece of research undertaken after the end of studies, most often later in professional life and generally involving professional experience. The situation in Geneva was in this respect very similar to that in France. However unusual the practice, I decided to move right away to the preparation of a doctorate thesis. I had as *Directeur de thèse* Maurice Bourquin, one of the great international lawyers of that period, professor at the University and at the Graduate Institute of International Studies. The subject I chose was the control of the implementation of multilateral agreements, which put me very much at the centre of a world in which I had long dreamt of being involved. I worked for two years very assiduously on research on five mechanisms of control existing or being contemplated within the League of Nations, i.e. minorities; mandates, which gave me the opportunity of a first direct contact with the question of Palestine : narcotics ; disarmament ; and the conventions of the International Labour Organization. My thesis was presented in 1946 and was very well received by the examiners. I was rewarded by the Bellot Medal of the University of Geneva and a fellowship at the International Law Academy at the Hague.

It is an indication of the seriousness with which the doctorat was considered, that it was necessary in Geneva at the time to deliver to the University 200 printed copies of your doctorate thesis in order to get your title of *Docteur en Droit* formally bestowed. We had by then married, and my salary was used to entertain the household and my wife's salary financed the printing of my thesis. It is a book of 350 pages.

## 4. Major dimensions in early years

Before moving to talking about my professional life, I feel that however short and sketchy my story should be kept, there are three dimensions of my adolescent and young adult life that I wish to mention here. They have been so important to me and occupied so much space in my time and mind that they were for many years a constituent part of my personality.

I would first refer to my musical activity as a violoncellist. The choice of the instrument was not really mine. My father had a vivid reminiscence of having heard, and been very moved and impressed with, the sound of that instrument during his studies in Zürich, and he very early encouraged me to start learning to play the cello, which I did in early teenage. It is the context in which I undertook studying the instrument which gave to that activity the importance it soon acquired in my adolescent life. My parents registered me at the Ecole Sociale de Musique (today renamed Conservatoire Populaire de Musique), which had as Director Fernand Closset, a Belgian violinist and composer of immense talent, both musical and pedagogic, Brandia, a Spanish Republican refugee, was the name of my cello teacher. The atmosphere at the School was quite convivial, and was very much fostered by the fact that Closset brought the students together in the school's orchestra as soon as we were able to hold our place in that ensemble. He taught us with boundless patience but also considerable pedagogic firmness the art of playing in a symphonic orchestra. Close

links of friendship developed among us students, which were reinforced when we had to move as a team to perform in public in outside settings.. Out of music school, we got into the habit of getting together for outings, generally on bicycle, on Sundays. Association with this group of friends remains in my memory one of the important aspects of my teenage life.

Although I very much enjoyed playing, as a cellist I never reached the level of an accomplished amateur. Brandia never told me so in such words, but I sensed his disappointment. He had of course a point of comparison, about which I shall talk in a moment. Let me just say that it is true that my academic studies and interests involved me so much that I seriously neglected the cello. I still took my instrument along to New York when we moved there in 1951, and cellist being a rare breed, I was quickly in demand from colleagues in musical circles within the United Nations staff. I was enlisted to take my place in a string quartet, but soon had it confirmed that my playing was not at the level of truly seasoned amateurs. I then gave up completely the cello, though I have remained all my life a keen amateur of classical music, both by frequent attendance at concerts and through spending too much money in buying recordings, first vinyl and then CD's.

Secondly, I could not evoke those early years of my life without referring to my favourite sport at the time, i.e., bicycle riding and cyclo-tourism. Since my early teens, I spent countless hours alone pedalling on the road, taking with the years more and more extensive trips in which I took great satisfaction, in a sense a resourcing from daily routine. On a typical Spring or Fall Sunday, I would before the War leave home before six a.m. , climb the Faucille and be back through la Givrine in late morning, or through the Marchairuz in the

afternoon. My "territory" thoroughly covered that part of the canton de Vaud, and there was hardly a village between the lake and the crest of the Jura I wouldn't have passed through in one of my rides. I never did, I should add, in any way seek performance as such in my cycling, and I had no shame in getting off the bike and pushing it on foot when the slope became too steep. Then in 1938 and 1939 came the great adventures of cyclo-tourism through Switzerland. My first companion was Jean Métraux, who also studied cello at the Ecole Sociale de Musique. He was clearly more gifted than I was and was in our school orchestra premier violoncelle while I meekly backed him up from the second pupitre. He also played the piano quite well, which impressed me very much. We had become very close friends through our common musical activities, and in 1938 decided that we would set out on bicycle to visit the Alps of Switzerland, camping all the way. We climbed most of the great passes of the Alps from the Bernese Oberland to the Grisons and the Tessin, none of which was asphalted at the time, and we had a simply wonderful though occasionally adventurous time. We still sometimes talk about it with Jean whom I see from time to time. The next year, I took off for a similar tour with another friend, Gérald Bourquin, of whom I shall be talking in a moment. This time, we had given up camping and lodged in youth hostels, the auberges de jeunesse of which there was at the time a very well organized extensive network in Switzerland. It was August 1939, and international news was getting worse by the day as we proceeded with our trip. On our way back from Engadine to the Tessin, we decided nevertheless to ride through Italy, skirting Lake Como through Lecco and Erba. I remember finding people we met on the road very boisterous and aggressive. The war was coming, and with their ally of the North, Italy would

win in a jiffy. The whole atmosphere was very uncomfortable, and we were happy to reach the Swiss border at Chiasso. Memories of those trips still pop up today for me when we drive through the Alps. They remained part of bicycle riding as an important dimension of my early life. After all, it is while on a bicycle trip that I first met my wife....mais c'est une autre histoire!

Last but by all means not least, the third dimension I feel I should mention in order not to miss an important aspect of my early life is my YMCA commitment and activity at the local level in the Paroisse de Châtelaine of the Geneva Protestant Church. This is where the bond of friendship developed which brought me very close to Gerald Bourquin, whom I should describe as my closest friend throughout my youth years. I have sometimes wondered whether the cement which made that friendship so strong had not been our joint experience for several years as Christmas messengers of our Parish. At that time, Christmas had not in any way acquired the glamour and commercial importance which we now witness, and the day was quite as usual in the morning of 24 December. In the afternoon, the Parish asked volunteers among its young adherents to visit destitute, ailing and impotent members of the community, and bring them some modest gifts prepared for them and a message of warm friendship and greetings on behalf the Parish. This brought us invariably into very modest homes. Clumsy as we were, we tried to find words that fitted the situation we were encountering, and we were at times even asked to sing one or the other of our traditional Christmas carols. It was often quite late when we finally reached home and joined in the final preparations for our family's celebration of the Holy Night. Gerald and I both considered this a very

important and rewarding moment, and living it together brought us very close. Our year-long activity consisted in running the Châtelaine section of the junior branch of YMCA. My father, incidentally, was an important leader of the movement in Geneva and in the whole of French-speaking Switzerland, but I never on my part left the grass-roots level. To organize month after month - except during Summer vacations - weekly meetings was no small task, and Gerald and I worked at it jointly, each of us bringing his contribution to the programme. We invariably started every meeting with a religious part consisting of a reading from the Bible and some comments either of our own or taken from appropriate texts, constantly trying, not always successfully, to elicit reactions and a discussion from the group of participants. The second part of the meeting was to be recreational or educational. We often programmed the reading of extracts from known authors. We prepared one winter a theatre play which we presented at a public performance specially organized by the Parish. We also sometimes late in the evening somewhat brashly engaged in bicycle racing on public streets in the neighbourhood, a silly game even if at the time traffic was exceedingly light as compared to the present. We of course participated in the social activities of the Parish, never missing the Easter Monday excursion. All told, my involvement with the junior section of Châtelaine of the YMCA took during several years a fairly large portion of my leisure time and represented a significant aspect of my overall activity.

## **5. First jobs**

I was meanwhile intellectually very much immersed through

my studies in the work of international organizations. At that time, of course San Francisco had taken place, the United Nations was taking shape and I was trying to follow those developments as closely as I could. I had to earn a living, however, and I took a job in Berne in the Federal Ministry of Economics. Instituted at the beginning of the War, Switzerland still had at the time special legislation on the war economy. This entailed in particular a legal mechanism amounting to the function of investigating judge for the prosecution of violations of special measures provided for in that legislation. So for about eighteen months, I interrogated and extracted guilt confessions from farmers who had slaughtered cows illegally, from butchers who had similarly sold their meat, from restaurant managers who had served meals without collecting the corresponding government-issued coupons de repas, from black marketers and gold smugglers. It was a fascinating experience, a voyage into the world of human psychology and social behaviour which afforded me a complete breakaway from my assiduous research on inter-state confidence-building and honesty-testing mechanisms.

War was over, however, and this activity would soon dwindle as economic life progressively returned to normality. I thus looked for a more stable source of income and applied for a job in the Federal Office of Social Insurance. They were in the process of recruiting a fairly large staff, because they were working on a major social project of considerable political significance in the post-war period upon which Switzerland was embarking. The novel and daring principle had been adopted of setting up a general scheme of old-age insurance covering literally the totality of the population, and I joined a team which was intensely involved in developing the technical

elements of such an all-encompassing social system. As all observers of the Swiss scene know, the AVS (Assurance Vieillesse et Survivants) which was then worked out is today still a centrepiece of the country's social policy. The sense of the historical importance of what we were doing was in our team very acute, and the work atmosphere highly intense. I had joined a group of very committed and devoted officials led by a young and dynamic leadership. I personally got heavily involved in the question of setting the rules for determining the participants' contributions to the insurance scheme, a relatively simple problem for workers and employees drawing a salary from an employer, but much more complicated for independent economic agents. And so was it in the mixed situations. I still vividly remember our complex negotiations with the representatives of the barber shop and hairdresser profession. In salary discussions in the profession, there had always been a tendency on the part of employers to inflate the estimated tips and gratuities. The same employers were quite reluctant, however, to accept the same figures when it came to take those as the basis for determining the employers' share of the contribution to be collected by the insurance scheme ! Another vivid occasion to observe the meanderings of human behaviour.

## **6. Teaching at Neuchâtel University**

The dynamics and the excitement of the job notwithstanding, my interest in the work of international organizations was so intense that I solicited and obtained permission from the Federal Administration in Berne to register at the University of Neuchâtel and give in the Law Faculty a course on the United

Nations, I was already a Docteur en droit, a prerequisite for teaching, and I graduated, if I may use the image, as a Privat-docent, a Swiss and German academic institution which roughly corresponds, I suppose, to the status of a lecturer in an American university. In order to receive that title which gives you the right to teach at university, you have to present an Habilitationschrift, in other words another thesis, I set to work again, and published a study on Article 2 (7) of the United Nations Charter. It offers an extensive examination of the question of the domestic jurisdiction of States, with a detailed analysis of the consideration by the Organization of the Spanish, South African and Indonesian situations in which context the question had been formally raised. Printed book form copies here also had to be remitted to the University, for which I found an easier way than for my doctorate thesis. Printed, my study was about one hundred pages long and it appeared as the main piece in the Swiss Yearbook for International Law, from which I obtained separata which properly presented allowed me to have my thesis published as a book.

So for two and a half years, I was going to Neuchâtel half a day every week, giving a two-hour class, one hour on the United Nations in general, and a one hour seminar which I focused on the question of Palestine, which was at that time already very much in the news in United Nations affairs. In order to keep abreast of what was going on in the Organization, I was for all that time-and I am very proud of it-a paying subscriber to the United Nations Bulletin. I got since then so much material free that I am still amazed that I was able to find the money to subscribe to the UN Bulletin. It seems that today very few people associated with the United Nations have ever seen some

early copies of that publication. It was at the time issued every two weeks. Every fortnight, you were getting a forty to fifty pages magazine which gave you a full coverage of United Nations activity. It presented all the relevant texts. All the resolutions and important drafts being discussed were there, summaries of debates, as well as plenty of pictures. It was for me an invaluable source of information. In fact, after joining the United Nations I would very soon realize that I knew much less about it from within than I had before reaching New York. Being deeply involved in my little setting. I had no time to keep the overview of the United Nations that I had maintained from the outside before joining the Secretariat of the Organization.

## **7. A job with an international dimension**

While very much interested in my work in the field of social insurance, I still very much hoped that I could find a professional activity consistent with my academic interest, and joining the Secretariat of the United Nations remained my dream. I was acutely aware, however, that I had in this respect a major problem. The Swiss had not been in San Francisco, and they were not joining the United Nations. Nationality being a cardinal element in the recruitment of staff for the Organization, especially so at the junior levels, my chances of getting a job with them were consequently exceedingly remote. I placed my only hope in my legal training including my doctorat and my teaching as privat-docent . I also realized that in the United Nations Secretariat, human rights was a subject where law would be particularly important. I thought that in this context, I could perhaps offer my skills as a lawyer. So I

went to Paris during the 1948 session of the General Assembly, the one which adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I was interviewed by Sir John Humphrey, the Director of the Human Rights Division of the Secretariat. I put forward my academic credentials and Humphrey was very sympathetic to the idea of hiring me as a young lawyer on his team. But he knew the rules of the game, and he was emphatic that nationality was an absolute obstacle. There was just no way in which they could see to make in my case an exception. I obviously lacked the connections which would have made this possible.

It was just fate that finally decided otherwise. In 1948, I became at some point aware of the existence of an international bureau in Berne, which was called the International Penal and Penitentiary Commission (IPPC). It was one of several Bureaux de Berne, secretariats of international organizations which Governments had found it appropriate to locate in neutral and small Switzerland. The IPPC had been created to ensure international cooperation at the technical level, principally among Ministries of Justice, in the field of the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders, Members representing their Government in the Commission were essentially the Directors of prison administration, sometimes people from the judiciary entrusted with the control of penal sentences execution. The Commission was a sort of clearing house and think tank on problems related to the administration of justice, the organization and functioning of the penitentiary system and prevention policy. They had organized every five years since the 1920s international assizes which were known as the Congrès international pénal et pénitenciaire, and its secretariat published a substantial quarterly periodical which

was a basic reference in their field. When I heard that the IPPC was looking for a lawyer, for a jurist for their secretariat, I immediately applied without any hesitation. I must confess that my interest was not in the substance of the work of the Commission. I was simply deeply interested in working in a mechanism of multilateral cooperation, in a job with an international dimension, with the opportunity to see how it operated. I joined the secretariat of the IPPC at the time when an American, Thorsten Sellin, had just been designated Secretary-General of the Commission. He was coming from a Pennsylvania university, and he was bringing some very American dynamism into a Secretariat theretofore somewhat embedded in routine. I enjoyed very much working with Sellin and I developed a real interest as well as fairly rapidly considerable knowledge in the substance of our mandate. My legal training was in this respect very useful, and particularly relevant at the time of the drafting and negotiation of standard rules for the treatment of prisoners. Comparative studies of different national institutions and practices were equally stimulating, and I even ended up publishing under my name in their periodical an analysis of the practice of member countries in the treatment of abnormal offenders.

## **II. New York**

### **8. Joining the United Nations**

When I had expressed interest in the job in the IPPC, I had been warned that my position there might not be as secure as it would appear to be. The United Nations, concerned about overlapping and duplication in international cooperation, was trying to put some order into various fields of international activity in the economic and social sector. There was a move in ECOSOC, the Economic and Social Council, to regroup within the United Nations in New York the activities of several organizations which in the past had been set up on their own and were working as independent entities, and the IPPC was on their list. What would be in that case the fate of the staff of such organizations was anybody's guess, but I should have no illusion about any prospect of further employment should the ECOSOC position prevail. This warning in effect delighted me. I was quite prepared to take the gamble in the hope that this might be after all for me the way into the United Nations Secretariat.

In 1949, ECOSOC indeed engaged with the IPPC in protracted negotiations aiming at the dissolution of the IPPC and the transfer of its functions and activities to the United Nations. Witnessing those negotiations from the IPPC side - as a junior staff member I did not actually participate in them but was

quite well placed to observe the process - gave me a first glance at the complexity of the entity to which we in multilateral affairs so easily refer to as "the Government". The budget of the IPPC was financed essentially by resources of the Ministries of Justice, and their representatives fought very hard to safeguard the autonomy of their well-tested and smooth-working cooperation mechanism. They had to be convinced by their colleagues from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, who were the ones who were sitting in New York, that it was really necessary to take the broader view of the requirements of a rational management of international cooperation and to put some orderliness in the process of international cooperation in the social field. Those negotiations at the national level between Ministry of Justice and Foreign Affairs Ministry officials turned out to represent by far the most difficult part of the process. The position of Foreign Affairs and of ECOSOC finally prevailed. The General Assembly at its Fifth Session in 1950 decided through Resolution 415 (V) the transfer to the United Nations of the functions of the IPPC. A negotiated annex to the Resolution offered a plan which called for a continuation by the United Nations of the activities hitherto exercised by the Commission and for the transfer of its assets to the Organization. It went on to state that "in view of the enlargement of the functions of the United Nations and in order to maintain continuity in the work, the United Nations shall invite the services of two professional officers at present employed by the IPPC". I was later told that those two officers being of Swiss nationality, there had been in New York a serious discussion as to whether one could make an exception and accept to take them over even as they were not nationals of a Member State. It appears that it was really par gain de paix, not to further irritate especially European Governments who

had been so reluctant to accept the dissolution of the IPPC, that it was decided to make the concession that those two staff members would be incorporated into the Secretariat. And so it was that in spite of a wrong nationality I did in February 1951 join the United Nations Secretariat. This allowed me to jokingly point out at the time that the Secretary-General and I were the two officials in the Organization who drew their tenure from a formal decision of the General Assembly. I soon dropped the joke. however, because its implication would have been that the United Nations was to make use of my services only in the field for which I had been taken over. Events later definitely took a different turn.

We took for six months a furnished apartment in Clinton Terrace in Jamaica, Queens, then moved to Parkway Village, New York's United Nations staff "ghetto". This housing development of two storey buildings with - for New York City - ample greenery had been built specifically to offer housing to United Nations staff. It was located in Kew Gardens, half-way between Manhattan and Lake Success, where the Organization had in a former factory its provisional New York seat pending the construction of its Headquarters on East River. The complex offered over six hundred housing units, more than two thirds of which were rented by United Nations officials with family and kids. The others were occupied by Americans, the neighbours who offered us the first opportunity to meet and know "natives". This turned out to be a fascinating experience. Obviously, Americans choosing to live in Parkway Village had deliberately decided to settle in an international and interracial community. They clearly were not the typical East Coast middle class Jones of the early fifties. Many had been or still were active on the very left of their country's political

spectrum, and hardly representative of the average American mind. They were open, curious and friendly toward foreign cultures and we soon developed with them bonds of friendship some of which have lasted for more than half a century. It would be quite an experience to live on their side the wave of MacCarthyism which was then sweeping America.

## **9. A life companion**

The foreword of this essay clearly delineates the scope and limits of this narrative, .i.e. my professional life, essentially devoted to serving the United Nations. It should thus be clear that a section devoted to my wife Marg, whom I had married on 10 August 1946, would also limit itself to her role and position in relation to my professional life. It is not to be a story of our relationship in general, the intimacy of which in any case neither she nor I would wish to see violated.

Perhaps nothing could better describe the setting of the marvellous joint venture we lived throughout my career than a reminder of the successive locations at which the vagaries of my professional life made us "settle", that is establish a household for a period of time. Here they were : Berne, New York, Beirut, New York, Jerusalem, Santiago de Chile, Beirut, Geneva, Nairobi, Geneva, Caracas, Geneva. None of those destinations was at any time of Marg's choice. They were all the reflection of the circumstances of my career as it unfolded, the result of my acceptance of jobs which were offered to me - and, I should add, none of which I had taken the initiative of seeking. This brings to my mind the famous word of one of my

colleagues, "My UN career cost me three divorces !". To others, more lucky, their marriage just cost them one or more UN jobs. It has been my unique privilege to have married a person who fully accepted to share my life irrespective of the strains and conditions which my professional life would impose on the setting within which we would be living, Marg would probably be prompt to point out that this situation had its rewards. Such dynamism gave her the golden opportunity to know and enjoy the world at large and offered her an highly enriching life. The point here is not to draw a balance sheet of what her bondage to my professional life represented for her. The point is for me to stress that I have known the rare happiness of keeping my life companion at my side throughout a particularly animated and eventful career, and to express my deep gratitude for this gift.

The importance of the support I thus constantly received could not be overestimated, even if the description of the unfolding of professional situations and events does not necessarily call for it being spelled out. It started early in our marriage, when I was in Berne pursuing my extra-professional interest in international law and in United Nations affairs. I was spending unduly large portions of my free time, long evenings and sometimes entire week-ends, working on my hobby, editing and proof-reading articles for Professor Wehberg's *Friedenswarte*, then preparing my *Habilitationschrift* and spending on average at least fifteen hours of preparation for every weekly teaching session at the University of Neuchâtel, and finally embarking on a short-lived collaboration with the *Annuaire suisse de droit international* which had to be cancelled when we left for New York in early 1951. During nearly five years, Marg never wavered in supporting my

endeavours, though often foregoing joint cultural or leisure time activities such as befit a young married couple.

Our eldest child was nine months old when we left Switzerland and started to move into a succession of postings for the United Nations. Each time I rushed into the job that I had been asked to perform, and Marg was left with the task of fixing our accommodation. Only once, moving back from Nairobi to Geneva, did we return to the apartment which our children had continued to occupy during our absence. In all other cases, even returning to the same city meant looking for a new home. It was each time Marg who rendered our household operational, making it the warm home in which we wanted to live, and of paramount importance, for a long time looking after the adjustment of our three children to their new condition in terms of both schooling and free time activities. It is not that she couldn't ever count on my assistance, and circumstances of my job permitting, we worked side by side at solving our problems. But the responsibility, often the ultimate responsibility, was hers. This was in particular the case during my frequent absences on mission away from duty station. Those included seven months in the Congo in 1960, three months in India in 1968, over two months in Peru in 1970, stretches of several weeks at various times in New York or for the servicing of conferences. Many missions were shorter, but they were frequent. Urgent problems had often to be solved and requirements met during my absence. House and school attendance management in a succession of different settings was truly an exceptionally demanding job and Marg never faltered in responding to the challenge of the task. I can truly and sincerely state that my ability to pursue the successful career which I enjoyed was made possible by the constant

unfailing support which I received from my wife.

## **10. An unexpected dimension of cultural diversity**

Having for so long wished to join the United Nations Secretariat, I was prepared to meet cultural diversity. I did expect to have to cope with a variety of language backgrounds, upbringings, values and creeds, motivations, attitudes and ways of life. I was soon impressed with still another dimension of the difficulties inherent to multilateral cooperation. I joined in the Secretariat building in Manhattan the so-called Section of Social Defence of the Department of Social Affairs, which had just moved in from Lake Success. The programme of work of that Section was in broad terms largely similar to that of the IPPC : research, comparative studies and proposals for standards setting in respect of crime prevention, the handling of common delinquents, rehabilitative measures and programmes, prison administration, abnormal offenders, juvenile delinquents. The small section was staffed by specialists from France, the USA, South Africa, Syria and now Switzerland, soon later Spain/Bolivia and Burma. We had all been hired to work on the same programme, with the same objectives and methods and on the basis of the same job description. It immediately struck me, however, that all my colleagues of Anglo-Saxon culture were by training sociologists, while all those - including myself - of Latin culture were trained lawyers (Syrian education had been very much under French influence during the Mandate). Remembering the way in which the disciplines of the social sciences traditionally used to mould the minds of students, it will be appreciated that it was a

serious cultural divide, though of a different kind, that we had to bridge to develop a coherent team work in the Section. The experience turned out to be for most of us, I think, a valuable intellectual enrichment. It did not take place without its hitches and problems, however, and vividly illustrated for me both the complexity and the fascination of working in a international setting of world-wide dimension.

## **11. The shadow of MacCarthyism**

Individual circumstances as much as ideology very much influenced the way in which the pressure of MacCarthyism on the United Nations Secretariat was perceived and experienced by members of the staff. Having lived as a teenager in Europe through the Thirties, I had been deeply involved , intellectually and emotionally, in the politics of what has been described as *le temps des passions*, The rise of Fascism and Nazism, the Spanish Civil War, the uncontrollable sliding toward war and the paralysis of the League of Nations all left me with a bitter sense of antagonism and confrontation. After the war, I trusted that being part of the staff of the world organization would remove from my immediate concerns the dilemmas raised from the confrontation which was again polarizing antagonistic forces on the world scene. Joining the United Nations Secretariat, I thought, would allow me to work in full serenity at the service of the world community as a whole, exempted from the agonizing political tensions that had marked the pre-war years and were again to be felt.

The shock was brutal and the awakening to reality quite

traumatic. I had hardly taken my bearings on how to get to my office and started to memorize the names of my new colleagues when I was invited to attend meetings called by the Staff Council in which tempers ran quite high denouncing the interference of elements of the host country with the independence of the United Nations Secretariat. The problem haunted us for most of the following three years. Inflammatory headlines in most of the New York press brand marking the United Nations as a nest of red agents, termination of the appointment of American staff members "in the interest of the United Nations" after they had appeared before a Sub-Committee of the United States Senate, arrangements to temporarily accommodate an FBI office in the very Secretariat building to facilitate a loyalty investigation of all United States citizens employed by the United Nations, controversy around the findings of an ad hoc Commission of Jurists appointed by the Secretary-General, debates on the Secretary-General's personnel policy in the General Assembly, the dramatic suicide of United Nations Legal Counsel Abe Feller, the resignation of Secretary-General Trygve Lee, the judgement of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal that some of the dismissals had been arbitrary and to award in those cases financial compensation, subsequent discussions about the advisability of amending the Statute of the Administrative Tribunal... we were not spared any aspect of a drama which acutely revived in my memory *le temps des passions*. The realistic perspective I thus gained of the United Nations made me wiser and, I dare say, in the long run probably better equipped to serve the Organization than in the limbo of utopia.

My interest in working for the United Nations had remained intact, as I had the occasion to confirm in my own mind in

1954. I then received a call from the Dean of the Law Faculty of the University of Neuchâtel. They still remembered me and there was an opening for a professorship. They did not offer me the job, which would entail some teaching beyond international law, but wondered whether I would be interested in the position and they could put my name forward for consideration. My response was clear and crisp. Nothing had happened since I had reached New York that would have made me change my mind about my desire and hope to pursue a career in the Secretariat of the Organization.

## **12. Being recognized as a lawyer**

The first expansion of my activity beyond social defence in the United Nations Secretariat was in the direction of legal affairs. I was asked in 1955, to join the team of lawyers who were involved in developing a Repertory of the practice of the United Nations. My doctoral thesis was probably at least in part the cause of this call. After all, two hundred copies of my book on the control of the implementation of international agreements had been spread around, and I had received a fellowship from the Academie de droit international at The Hague as an award for that study. On the other hand my Habilitationsschrift, an essay on Article 2 (7) of the Charter, which had also received widespread diffusion, had probably been at the time one of the most in-depth analyses of the origin of that provision and of its use in the Spanish question-the attempt to deny the Franco regime a seat in the United Nations, the India-South Africa dispute and the question of Indonesia. It should thus be assumed that Stavropoulos, the Legal Counsel, his Deputy Schachter, and I don't know who else in the Legal

Department knew about my legal work. It is, I suppose, as a result of my scientific work before I joined the United Nations, that I was involved for a while in legal work for the United Nations. I must confess that I was rather proud to realize that the Legal Department knew of my existence as an international lawyer.

The Repertory of the United Nations practice was to be an analysis, article by article, of the Charter as reflected in the activities of the Organization. Julia Henderson was my boss in Social Affairs and she was asked by Stavropoulos whether I could be made available to work for the Repertory on Articles 55 and 56, the introductory articles of the chapter of the Charter on international economic and social cooperation. She readily agreed, and I spent some months devoting part of my time to legal affairs, but still based in social defence. This cooperation was suspended when I left for Lebanon on a social defence assignment early in 1956. I did not then realize that the Legal Department would be the one for which I would later spend so much time in the field.

As an aside: Julia Henderson's name will pop up more than once in the following pages of this narrative. She was my first boss from the top segment of the United Nations Secretariat staff, before Constantin Stavropoulos, Raúl Prebisch, Philippe de Seynes, Manuel Perez-Guerrero, Maurice Strong and Bradford Morse. Julia Henderson was a splendid leader. I learned a lot from her wisdom and had for her unreserved respect and admiration. To have a woman as a boss also was a very valuable experience. It helped erase in me whatever remnant of machismo might have subsisted in the cultural

background of a Swiss lawyer.

## **III. In the Middle East**

### **13. An instructive technical co-operation assignment**

In 1955, the Government of Lebanon made a request to the United Nations for the services of an expert in the field of social defence, to look into the management and procedures of an institution for juvenile delinquents and more generally into the existing national framework for the handling of youthful offenders. In a move which was rather unusual at the time, the Chief of the Social Defence Section, Manuel Lopez-Rey, asked me whether I would be prepared to undertake that assignment. My reaction was immediate. A field assignment was for me the rounding up of what I expected and hoped my job at the United Nations would be. I didn't realize that I would later in my career spend so much time out in the field. The idea of being able to be at the service of a Government under a specific mandate, was very exciting. My name was put forward and accepted by the Government, and I was thus embarked on my first field assignment.

Reaching Beirut with my family in January 1956, I was received with utmost courtesy in the Ministry of Social Affairs from which the request had originated, but also with a disconcerting detachment of all senior officials from any specific programme of activity for my mission. As this

uncomfortable situation prolonged itself, my impatience and curiosity led me to explore the reason for this apathy. It took me a few weeks to find out that the Minister of Social Affairs had been in 1955 at the centre of a violent political controversy, and that accusations of mismanagement of the institution for juvenile delinquents for which his Ministry was responsible had been played up in the attacks of which he was the object. The Minister in response had wished to demonstrate his sense of responsibility by requesting the assistance of the United Nations in the matter. Between the moment of that request and my arrival in the country, however, a Cabinet reshuffle had taken place and the Minister of Social Affairs had left the Government. Criticism of the management of the institution had consequently abated and there was no urgently felt need in the Ministry to take particular measures in that respect. To thus trace the critical path of the request which had brought me to Lebanon was quite a sobering experience for a first field assignment !

As many colleagues must certainly have experienced, I did end up playing a considerably larger role than I had anticipated in the development of my mission's activities. This took place with the full cooperation, I hasten to say, of the officials of the Ministry of Social Affairs. During my advisory work at the reformatory and in respect of juvenile delinquency policy, I incidentally had the opportunity to be faced with the very sensitive pride which was known to be prevalent in Lebanon. I made at some point the suggestion that we could send staff for training and observation to a reformatory that was known as a very well run institution near Bethlehem. The idea was rejected with a sense of shock by my Lebanese counterpart. The message clearly was that "you shouldn't expect us to have

anything to learn from the Jordanians or the Palestinians". In the course of the year, the scope of my mission was extended to include a course to the personnel in charge of administering the prisons of the country and advice during visits to sites of detention. I thus ended up with the feeling of having carried out a very useful mission.

My final report gave a set of recommendations not all of which were welcomed in all quarters. One had hoped in some circles that I would recommend the privatization of the institution for juvenile delinquents to remove it from the jurisdiction of an incompetent Ministry of Social Affairs. A charitable association patronized by a very sophisticated upper-class society wanted to take over the reformatory. I strongly felt, however, that solving the problems of a weak public administration by simply by-passing it would tend to perpetuate that weakness and be in the long run a disservice to the country as a whole. I therefore forcefully made the point that I realized the difficulties that the Ministry would have to live up to its commitment, but thought that it should be encouraged and be given the means to do so. That recommendation was very ill-received in the private circles interested in the matter. Other proposals of my final report fared better. Back in Lebanon in 1963 as Director of the newly established United Nations Economic and Social Office in Beirut (UNESOB), I had the privilege of having a social worker with whom I had worked in 1956 confirm that my recommendation had been implemented and that children and adolescents held before trial in the main prison in Beirut were not any more left mixed with adults, but were kept in separate quarters within the prison.

My mission in Lebanon was most interesting in yet another respect. In addition to my assignment with that country's Government, I was entrusted with the task of developing the project of a regional seminar for the Arab states of the Middle East, to provide for an exchange of information and experience on prison administration. I had already made visits to Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Egypt in regard to this project in October 1956, when the Suez crisis broke out. The project was then postponed indefinitely. It had incidentally allowed me to see during a prison visit in Iraq the epitome of a punitive approach to the treatment of delinquents: prisoners carried chains riveted at their ankles, and the weight of their chains varied with the length of the sentence which had been pronounced against them ! With my mission in Lebanon terminated and the regional project postponed, I returned to New York with my family at the end of the year.

One of the aspects which has been for me very instructive in the experience of living in the Middle East at the time of the Suez crisis, has been to retrospectively realize how much the perspective of world events can be distorted depending on where you sit. Lebanon was then of course a world without mass media which had not yet adopted television. It needed for me and my wife to return to Europe to discover and grasp what the Hungarian crisis had represented in the Western world. The shock was dramatic. We had been so immersed in the Suez Crisis that, while being of course aware of the events at the time in Central Europe, I must truly say that we had never appreciated the intensity of the commotion provoked by the Budapest events until later, when we got closer to the physical setting in which that crisis had taken place. Switzerland, where we stopped on the way back to Headquarters, was still

preoccupied with accommodating a considerable influx of refugees from Hungary, and emotionally deeply involved in what had happened. In contrast, the Middle East had been I dare say almost indifferent to the whole affair. And this meant that not only in the press that I had read, but also with all the people with whom I had been in contact, the concentration had been entirely on the Suez crisis and its aftermath. We had almost no feelings about the Hungarian events as they were perceived in the West. I have often reflected in subsequent years on this experience. When you live for several years in Latin America, as we did at a later stage, you have to wonder whether you are still keeping some kind of reasonable track on what is going on in the world, or you are being frustrated from that broader view by the intensity of local or regional preoccupations.

## **14. Settling in Jerusalem**

Back at Headquarters in January 1957, we resettled in another apartment in Parkway Village. I returned to my work in the Section of Social Defence, where de-briefing on my mission in Lebanon aroused considerable interest. I also resumed my part-time activity with the Legal Department on the Repertory of the practice of the United Nations. I was then one day in January 1958 unexpectedly asked by Stavropoulos, the Legal Counsel, whether I would be prepared to leave forthwith for Jerusalem for a two-months stopgap assignment as legal adviser to the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in Palestine (UNTSO). The incumbent had just been declared persona non grata by one of the parties and the search for a successor in the post had not yet begun. I reported to UNTSO

within four days and immersed myself immediately in the intricacies of a truly fascinating job. It was on the fifty-seventh day of my two-months assignment that a telex arrived from Headquarters offering me to keep the post for a full term of two years. It is an indication of the austerity at the time of the United Nations personnel policy - but also of the spirit which then moved the Organization - that it was not even hinted that I might return to New York to wind up my personal affairs before settling in Jerusalem. It was left to my wife alone to cancel the lease on our apartment, to sell our car, to take the children out of school and to make all arrangements for shipping and storage of personal effects.

My family showed up in Jerusalem within six weeks and we had to decide how to settle in the then divided city. The whole of the Arab side in the East was then commonly referred to as the Old City and the Jewish side in the West as the New City, and the strictly controlled Mandelbaum Gate was the only direct passage between the two sectors. The UNTSO personnel had an additional flexibility of movement. Its Headquarters at Government House was a fairly large estate between the armistice lines with gates opening both to the East and to the West. Full freedom of movement for UNTSO personnel was a clearly established principle, and the staff was free to select housing anywhere in the city according to their own wishes.

I had taken accommodation on arrival in a small hotel on the road to Mount Scopus in the Old City, and my family joined me there. Having found the most appropriate schools for our three children in the New City, however, we had to shuttle them through Mandelbaum Gate, and this my wife did mostly

not two times but four times a day as we were having the children back with us for lunch. As could be expected, this insistence on freedom of movement did not at the time fall well on either side : people at school did not understand why those children should return to the Old City after hours, and people at our residence wondered why they should go to the New City for schooling. So we finally decided to take a one-year lease on a house in Beit Hakerem, a pleasant suburb of the New City, and only returned to accommodation in the Old City in the final weeks of our stay in Jerusalem.

## **15. Monitoring the Israeli - Palestinian conflict**

I did not in the least realize at the time that my early direct experience with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would lead to this question haunting me for the rest of my life. This passion culminated after my post-professional retirement in my chronicling during nine years, from 1997 to 2005, the major events of that tragedy in a series of press articles which I subsequently published as a book under the title : *Palestine meurtrie, Eclairages sur une cause en détresse*. This is testimony of the intensity and depth of the experience I lived through during the two years I spent at the service of the United Nations in its attempt to bring under control an exceedingly complex politico-military situation.

After the events of the watershed year 1967 and their aftermath, it sounds almost unrealistic if not unreal, to describe the role and functioning of the United Nations peace-keeping operation in Palestine at the time I joined it as legal adviser.

While peace had been until then elusive, the Six-Days-War made a most profound impact on the situation and sealed for a long time the fate of the region. The total and crushing victory of Israel's armed forces and its rapid capturing of the theretofore Arab portion of mandated Palestine consisting of Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, were overwhelmingly viewed by the Israelis as the fulfilment of the Zionist dream, i.e., a Jewish State in all the space from the Mediterranean to the Jordan river. Ever since, the ghost of that dream has haunted Israel and made it perpetuate occupation and evade over more than forty years all attempts at settling the question of Palestine through a formula of partition. During that time, the role of UNTSO and of the United Nations in general progressively dwindled under the combined impact of the situation on the ground and the unfailing support lent to Israel's position by the United States.

In 1958, that role was clear and explicit. Armistice Agreements had been negotiated in 1949 under United Nations auspices between Israel and all its Arab neighbours Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, and the mission of UNTSO was to ensure the respect by all parties to those Agreements. They reflected the position of the parties on the ground at the time, following the considerable expansion by Israel, through war in 1948, of the part of the land which had been attributed to the Jewish State by the United Nations partition plan of 1947. The West Bank had then been de facto annexed by Jordan and Gaza was occupied by Egypt. The armistice lines traced by the Agreements were clearly delineated in all their details by annexed maps, and they were already at that time deemed to represent the borders of the Hebrew State. They were to be referred to later mostly as "the green line", or "the lines of 4

June 1967". The Armistice Agreements provided for the deployment of military observers along the borders and the setting up of four Mixed Armistice Commissions with in each case equal representation of the parties and a Chairman provided by UNTSO.

The situation when I reached Jerusalem varied from one sector to the other. On the Egyptian side, the Suez war of 1956 had led to the deployment in Gaza of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF), and the role of UNTSO had been taken over by that peace-keeping entity. Except for occasional incidents involving often the movement of Bedouins in the Negev, there was little UNTSO activity in the Egyptian sector. The Lebanese sector was also relatively calm at the time, surprisingly so if one thinks of subsequent events in that area. The Israel - Lebanon Mixed Armistice Commission met regularly and had developed a routine for handling incidents that occurred. On the other hand, UNTSO was deeply involved on a daily basis in the Jordanian sector, including Jerusalem, and in the Syrian sector. Military observers on the ground were in constant touch by radio with Headquarters at Government House. Incidents were promptly reported and triggered immediate action as needed on our part to ensure the restoration of calm. On the Jordanian front, incidents often revolved around the illegal crossing of the border. An arrangement had also been agreed between the parties for the providing of supplies to an Israeli enclave at Mount Scopus in Jerusalem by way of periodic convoys transiting through Jordanian territory. The detailed inspection of the contents of those convoys under UNTSO supervision was an event which sometimes degenerated into a serious confrontation. For me personally the most dramatic occurrence in that sector was the

investigation of the killing by sniper fire of a colleague in UNTSO, a senior Canadian military observer, while on duty patrol in the Jerusalem area. The serious incident had to be reported to the Security Council and required for a while considerable attention.

The situation was particularly tense at the time in the Syrian sector. The Armistice Agreement had provided in the Hula Valley below the Golan Heights for a demilitarized zone in which civilian activities would be allowed under the supervision of UNTSO. Much of the land in that zone had been owned and cultivated by Arabs, some had been purchased during the Mandate by Jewish settlers, and the cadastral situation was intricate. Arabs expelled from the area during the war had taken refuge in villages on the slopes of the Golan. The unfounded assertion by Jewish elements, contrary to the terms of the Armistice Agreement, of their right to cultivate the totality of the land in the demilitarized zone irrespective of land ownership, was the cause of constant incidents throughout the time I spent in Jerusalem. I was repeatedly deprived by emergency calls to Government House of the Sunday excursion so often planned with my family. Israelis would enter the zone and start working early on Sunday morning, the beginning of the week after the Shabbat. Some of the Arab farmers had told our observers that they would open fire on the Jews if they attempted to work on land they still owned in the zone, and they often did. Aware of the forthcoming Arab reaction to their move and prepared to respond, the Israelis returned the fire, and the exchange rapidly spread. This was immediately reported to Jerusalem, and set into motion the complex process of arranging for re-establishing the ceasefire, often involving the highest echelons of the military command in Tel Aviv and

Damascus. This standard scenario repeated itself constantly. As a breach of the ceasefire, considered as an extreme form of violation of the Armistice Agreement, came from the Syrian side, mostly Syria was blamed for those recurring incidents. This made me later state, when discussing the difficulties with which I had been faced in my job with UNTSO, that while it was true that ninety percent of the incidents in that sector had involved a breach of the ceasefire by Syria, in ninety percent of the cases the incident had started by an Israeli provocation in the form of an action contrary to the Armistice Agreement. It was with considerable satisfaction that I noted a few years ago that Moshe Dayan, in a written statement toward the end of his life which received considerable attention in Israel, explicitly recognized that the Israelis had at the time deliberately provoked the Syrians in order to build a case for the occupation of the Golan Heights. I also remember the occasional flights to Damascus in the UNTSO plane to accompany the Chief of Staff, Swedish General Carl Carlsson von Horn, to attend the meetings of the Israel-Syria Mixed Armistice Commission when the gravity of the matter to be discussed required his presence personally. It was on return to Jerusalem from one of those flights that our plane got into trouble at Kalandia Airport. The captain reported difficulties in getting the landing gear into place and while circling asked us to brace for an emergency landing. Finally proceeding to land, it was reassuring to see through the windows the fire engines and ambulances lined up to intervene if necessary, but also moving to see Marg and our three children standing in front of the airport building waiting for the plane to touch ground. The landing gear finally clicked and nothing had happened except a moment of considerable tension.

## **16. A cultural experience in claim settlement**

As could be expected, armistice affairs represented the bulk of the work of the legal adviser in UNTSO. The function also involved when needed legal support in all aspects of the life of the Mission, and this included the settlement of traffic accidents in which UNTSO personnel was implicated. Not long after my arrival in Jerusalem, one of our military observers had the misfortune of killing a child near a hilltop village on the road from Ramallah to Nablus. Evidence and testimony were gathered and recorded by the Jordanian Police to the satisfaction of UNTSO and the terms of a financial compensation agreed with the family of the deceased child through the good offices of the Attorney-General of East Jerusalem.

The Attorney-General asked me a few days later to meet him in his office. The matter had been settled in terms of the status of UNTSO in Jordan, he said, and we were in our right to leave it at that if we so wished. He felt it his duty to point out, however, that under customary practice in Palestine, a ceremony of reconciliation , or *sulha* , between the family of the aggrieved party and that of the offender would have to take place in order for full peace to be restored between the two families. In the eyes of the local population, UNTSO was a foreign family living in their land. Would I be prepared to go, representing the head of that family, with the military observer involved in the accident to the village where the family of the child lived, and go through such a process of reconciliation ? He added that to do so might make for the whole village quite a difference for years in their perception of the white UN jeeps that would regularly continue to travel the road on which the accident had

taken place. He also indicated that he would be pleased to accompany us and act as an interpreter.

Without referring the matter to Headquarters - which I fully informed after the event - I accepted the suggestion of the Attorney-General who then made the necessary arrangements with the family. On a sunny early spring afternoon, the three of us left our vehicles down the road and proceeded on foot up into the village, with the military observer rather uneasy about it all. The whole village was expecting us, men and children in the streets, women peeping at practically every door or window. The ceremony in the child's family home was simple and moving. Words of deep regret, of pardon and of peace were uttered and we all in turn ate with a single spoon from a large dish prepared for the occasion. So remote from armistice affairs, but so rewarding as a human experience !

## **17. Equanimity in a troubled city**

I was still at UNTSO when in the Summer of 1958 the first civil war broke out in Lebanon. It was late one evening in Jerusalem when a cable came in from New York : the Security Council had just decided to set up the United Nations Observer Group in Lebanon (UNOGIL) and we were requested to dispatch at dawn the next day into Lebanon a first contingent of military observers drawn from the UNTSO establishment. We were very much involved in the following months in lending logistic support to the UNOGIL mission and this brought us often to Beirut. On one such occasion, time permitting, I decided to call by phone from UNESCO House

my good friend Frederic Tabah who was posted in Beirut as a regional adviser on demography. The noise was intense on the phone and Frederic spoke loudly : "Sorry, I can't move now, there is heavy shooting down the street. But stay at UNESCO. I'll come and fetch you as soon as it has calmed down." United Nations personnel involved in peace-keeping operations have often been exposed to danger in a variety of circumstances - we were fired at that very day on our way back to Beirut airport. But thinking of the cosiness of life at Headquarters, I still fondly remember this calm and sober posture on the part of a staff member whose job and posting had nothing to do with the political side of the United Nations mandate.

## **IV. The Congo**

### **18. From the Middle East to Latin America... and Africa**

In December 1959 I left the Middle East with my family for a second time, but this time not for New York, but for Santiago de Chile. I have been in my career at the United Nations very lucky. Not a single one of my assignments has been a move due to my own initiative. Each and every time, somebody came and said that while they were happy with what I was doing, they thought I might be even more useful if I did something else. Now those things don't happen in a vacuum. "Le droit mène à tout, à condition d'en sortir." Was it because of my legal training that it was assumed I could engage in a variety of functions? I had been recruited to work in social defence, but Julia Henderson who was Director of the Division of Social Affairs, had already indicated that she wished me to do something else. There had been question that she would ask me to take the job of Chef de Cabinet in her Division. The idea had also been tossed around that I should be asked to go to Santiago de Chile to head the Social Affairs Division of the Economic Commission for Latin America, generally referred to in all languages as CEPAL, the initials of its Spanish name Comisión Económica Para America Latina. Then the Legal Counsel asked me to go to Palestine for two months, which turned out to be two years. During that time the idea took hold at Headquarters that I should go to CEPAL. I would have probably gone to Santiago earlier if it hadn't been for the

Palestine assignment. But Julia Henderson showed patience and kept that idea in mind. I thus moved to Santiago de Chile in January 1960, in pursuance of what had been a plan of Social Affairs temporarily disrupted by the legal people. Time put pressure on the job and I flew to Santiago. My family, on the other hand, travelled from New York to Valparaiso by boat through the Panama Canal, a three weeks' journey which was for Marg and for our children a memorable experience.

But this was not to be the end of my involvement with legal affairs. My next field assignment was just an aftermath of Palestine. In the Summer of 1960, the United Nations was beset by a rapidly deepening political crisis as the aftermath of the declaration of independence by the Belgian Congo. At the beginning of August, a cable came from New York to Raúl Prebisch, the Executive Secretary of CEPAL, saying that I was needed in the Congo as legal adviser and asking that I be detached to proceed to Leopoldville for six months. This was again an urgent call of a political nature, and therefore presumably having priority on the part of the Secretary-General's office. Prebisch was aware of the complexity of the political situation. The Congo was already looming as a serious crisis. He therefore agreed to Headquarters' request. This would be the contribution of CEPAL to the predicament in which the United Nations was finding itself on this issue. This of course after having ascertained from me that I was prepared to accept the assignment, which I was. I took however the precaution of indicating loudly and clearly to Prebisch and the senior staff in Santiago that I was responding to a call of duty, but I was not reorienting my career towards legal work, in spite of this being the second call I had within three years from the Legal Department. And I counted on them to take at the proper time

all the steps which would be necessary to repatriate me to Santiago. I had by then been close enough to legal affairs to fully realize that legal work in the United Nations can be fascinating - as it was for me in those two assignments - but could also be very boring or embarrassing. You might be asked to review the terms of procurement contracts, to explain the scope of the Headquarters Agreement to diplomats wishing to avoid paying traffic fines, or to defend the Secretary-General's position in the Administrative Tribunal in highly unpalatable cases. I was very much afraid that toppling my career towards the legal field might end me up in work assignments in which I would not be interested. So I went to the Congo making it very clear that this was in the line of duty, but was not something more than just a parenthesis in my career which was based in Santiago. I then proceeded within three days by way of Abidjan, which I reached on the very day of the proclamation of the independence of the Côte d'Ivoire, and Douala, and reached Leopoldville through ferry from Brazzaville on 7 August.

Indeed, the message went through, because after the Congo, I had throughout my career plenty of interface with the Legal Department on different matters, but never was I assigned again to the field as legal adviser to a peace-keeping operation. Only twice was I much later approached on my possible willingness to take a political field assignment, then not as legal adviser but as head of mission. In 1982, Rafeddin Ahmed, then Chef de Cabinet of Secretary-General U Thant, informally enquired, early during the Argentina-United Kingdom war, whether I would be available to head the United Nations presence in the Malvinas should it be decided to entrust the Organization with such an operation. The war ended swiftly,

however, and the idea of involving the United Nations in the conflict in the field never materialized. The following year, at the time of my retirement, Alvaro de Soto approached me to sound out my interest in the position of United Nations Representative on the Middle East conflict. This would have entailed a full time job with residence in the region, and I told him that time was over for me to consider taking such an assignment.

The Congo assignment was finally to keep me away from Santiago for seven months. The United Nations would have been prepared to authorize advanced home leave for my family to go to Switzerland during that time. Marg preferred to ensure continuity for the schooling of our children who had started their classes in Santiago, and she endured the longest separation in our married life with admirable courage and dedication.

## **19. Implementing an impossible mandate**

After the declaration of independence of the Belgian Congo on 30 June 1960, unrest soon broke out in the capital Leopoldville and rapidly spread. Belgians were harassed and threatened throughout the new country. The Belgian Government decided to send troops to its former colony for the declared purpose of restoring law and order and protecting Belgian nationals. Belgian military elements landed in four airports, and in some cases heavy fighting ensued with Congolese soldiers. The Belgian action was ill-received in the international community outside the West at a time when independence for Africa was

the order of the day, and the matter was raised in the United Nations. The Security Council called upon the Government of Belgium to withdraw its troops and authorized the creation of a multi-national peace-keeping force composed of a number of national contingents with the mandate to move into the Congo and assist the Government of the Congo in maintaining law and order. This force, called Organisation des Nations Unies au Congo (ONUC), soon was deployed to the major hotspots of the unrest.

When I reached Leopoldville, ONUC already had a military and civilian presence in all provinces of the Congo except Katanga. The mandate of the United Nations, however, for the largest venture in which it had ever been involved was still in the making. It is in the following weeks that a resolution of the Security Council and an interpretative memorandum of the Secretary-General approved by the Council authoritatively clarified the major issues involved. Our mandate, it had been made clear, was to assist the Government of the Congo in the restoration and maintenance of law and order without interfering in the internal affairs of the country. As the French would say, *il fallait le faire* ! Article 2, paragraph 7 of the Charter, which sets the principle of non-intervention in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any State, had not yet undergone the erosion of which it has been the object since the end of the Cold War, and whatever action that was agreed upon by the collectivity of Member States found its limits in that constitutional imperative.

The seven months I spent assisting in struggling with this impossible mandate in an attempt to give legal coherence to a

process which was eminently political and the object of basically political decisions, have probably represented for me the single most intensive educational experience in United Nations affairs of my whole career. Exacerbated by a constitutional crisis of immense complexity, the difficulty in sorting out for ONUC legitimate actions from legally dubious ones was truly staggering, in an atmosphere in which each and every political leader in the country considered himself a legal expert. The visit to Leopoldville of the Conciliation Commission for the Congo appointed by the General Assembly before which I had to appear to explain and illustrate the mandate of ONUC, did nothing to bring a consensus on the issues involved.

Our concern with the freedom of action and safety of the emerging political leadership of the country and for the avoidance of arbitrary arrests dramatically illustrated the nature of the difficulties we were facing. At their express request we provided United Nations guards to all the principal dignitaries, that they be siding with Kasavubu or with Lumumba. In that politically immature society, there was a marked tendency on the part of all of them to consider their own guard as a measure to which they were entitled on the basis of our duty to ensure the maintenance of law and order, and the guard of their political opponents as an undue interference in the internal affairs of the country. In the course of events, they were alternatively putting frantic requests for the reinforcement of their own guard, and screaming against protective measures taken in favour of others. The interpretation we gave of our mandate was in this case not particularly esoteric. The maintenance of armed guards at the residence of political leaders was the application of the principle of the maintenance

of law and order, and the equality of treatment in this respect of all political leaders ensured the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of the country. This was only half of the story, however. As according to our mandate we were also not to impede any legal action taken by the Congolese authorities, and this included the execution of arrest warrants. ONUC would oppose, on the other hand, actions by the authorities which were manifestly illegal, as was the case in an attempt to arrest Lumumba in November 1960. But obviously decisions of this kind could not be dissociated from their political context.

The Congo mission was perceived by us at the time as a truly multilateral operation applied to a specific political situation, and it was also in this regard a fascinating experience. Multilateralism struck us through the confusion which was created by having at a point no less than twenty-eight different nationalities participating militarily in the venture, and by the difficulty of putting together such an assemblage. I found myself by accident very closely involved in the matter. My chief of staff in Palestine, Swedish General Carl Carlsson von Horn, had been asked to take over the Congo operation. Upon my arrival, he immediately grabbed me into his office. We had developed a fairly close relationship in Jerusalem, and he professed to be very relieved by my presence. He was besieged by Heads of contingents and asked me to assist him in explaining to them the sense of what the United Nations was doing in the Congo. They were coming in and screaming, and each one had the same story : let me do the job, it will be much better achieved if I am left to do it alone, why should we have to complicate things by doing it with others? I got very much implicated because after we received a number of them jointly,

von Horn ended up asking those chaps - some were generals, all high level officers in their army- to go and see the legal adviser about the rationale of the United Nations action. We had developed a pep talk which we used repeatedly. Let's agree on one thing, we were saying. Left alone, you will do the job better than we are doing together. There is a coefficient of inefficiency which is built into a multilateral operation. We could even discuss the cost of that coefficient, the degree of efficiency we are losing by doing it together, rather than letting you do it all by yourself, But you have to realize that it is of the essence of what we are doing that we are doing it as a joint venture. The very nature of the operation is that we are conducting it together as the expression of an action by the international community.

Thus this experience of the Congo afforded me the privilege of living the concept of multilateralism in a concrete situation. Now of course the Congo situation was a very complex one. I have through the years read many books and heard many stories about it, about the East-West tension underlying the crisis and the role in Leopoldville of United States Ambassador Timberlake. It is typically a case where one has to be careful not to rewrite history afterwards on the basis of later information. But concentrating on my memory of that time, I would say that we then had a strong sense that we were demonstrating what was meant by working together as exponents of the community of nations.

## **20. Briefing a press uninterested in listening**

One of the sad reminiscences I have from my assignment with ONUC relates to the utter incapacity in which we were to have the facts of the situation and of our actions accurately reflected in the international press. The Congo was for a fairly long period in the Summer and Fall of 1960 very prominent in the hierarchy of world events and all major news networks were represented in Leopoldville by senior journalists who had flown in for the purpose. ONUC had organized a daily press briefing for correspondents which was taking place at 3 p.m. in the courtyard of the Hotel Royal where it had its headquarters. This briefing conducted by our press officer was regularly well attended by the representatives of the media, and Ralph Bunche and later Rajeswar Dayal themselves personally appeared before the journalists when this was felt appropriate, to give the necessary information and explanation of events that had taken place and of the involvement in them of the United Nations.

We received every morning at ONUC headquarters quite a few meters of telex tape transcription of the main coverage of the Congo crisis in the world press, and it was truly distressing to note that most of the time, no account had been taken by correspondents, in their coverage of events, of the facts and explanations that had been given to them the preceding afternoon. That the Congo situation was politically loaded was obvious to all of us. It was a serious disappointment, nevertheless, to ascertain that well-known correspondents of distinguished newspapers of world reputation simply inserted facts and events in the mould of their preconceived and prejudiced view of the process which the Congo was living, without concern for truth or objectivity. I have not been able to

forget this sad experience in the nearly forty years since then during which the same world press has been my only source of information on so many political world events.

## **21. The handing over of Kamina Base**

The difficult negotiations which took place at the beginning of the Congo crisis to ensure the deployment of ONUC and the withdrawal from the country of all Belgian military forces entailed the handing over by the latter to the United Nations of the military Base at Kamina in southern Katanga, a huge military installation part of the NATO network. It was agreed in New York that the Base would be taken over by ONUC in a unilateral move i.e., that the matter should not be the object of any further negotiation on the spot. The Secretary-General designated Galo Plaza, a former President of Ecuador who had been one of his Representatives in UNOGIL two years earlier, to act on his behalf for receiving the Base from the hands of the Belgian military, and I was assigned to accompany him as legal adviser to his mission.

Plaza and I left Leopoldville for Kamina on 30 August 1960 in a small plane with a contingent of ten Swedish military observers. After a somewhat tense landing, we were received with great courtesy by the Commander of the Base Colonel van Lierde who however immediately declared that he had no instructions whatsoever from Brussels about a handing over of the Base to the United Nations. Our attempt to clarify the situation with ONUC headquarters failed as we could not establish radio liaison with Leopoldville. Colonel van Lierde

offered to put the Belgian radio network at our disposal for us to liaise with Leopoldville through Brussels, but Plaza flatly declined. We were thus left to simply wait, and Plaza and I were accommodated in a room in the non-commissioned officers' quarters of the Base barracks and the Swedish observers in soldiers' quarters.

We had spent two nights in this situation when Colonel van Lierde finally received from Brussels the instructions reflecting the outcome of the negotiations which had taken place in New York a few days earlier. We put with him on paper a brief list of steps which would be followed for the handing over of the Base, including a flag -lowering and flag-raising ceremony with military honours. Events took place as planned and the Base was formally received by Plaza on behalf of the United Nations. It was to take some time for the Belgian military to withdraw. The small Swedish contingent was left in Kamina to ensure our presence on the Base and Plaza and I returned to Leopoldville. On being informed of the unfolding and of the results of our mission, the Secretary-General at first reacted angrily: the taking over of the Base had had to be a unilateral action on the part of the United Nations and he reproached Plaza for having negotiated its handing over and reflected that negotiation in a paper, however informal that paper might have been. When meeting personally with Hammarsjöld in New York a few days later, Plaza was able - as he told me later - to explain to the Secretary-General's full satisfaction that our discussions with the Belgians had entailed a purely procedural arrangement aimed to ensure orderliness in the taking over of the Base and had not involved any negotiation.

I was to return several times to Kamina Base in the following months in connection with the organization of civilian life. The Base with its very large local personnel and their families had a total population of 15,000 souls with administrative, schooling and medical facilities. While the United Nations had to exercise full jurisdiction over the Base, we were keen to leave as much as possible in place essential municipal services. The complex Belgian colonial administration had provided for an important role on the Base for the *chefferie coutumière*, and it is around that local customary structure that we developed our temporary control of that territorial entity. This necessarily involved the United Nations in the analysis of the working of a traditional African legal system and this task was for me one of the highlights of my Congo assignment.

## **V. Latin America**

### **22. Infiltrating the world of the economists**

I returned to Santiago de Chile in March 1961 through Switzerland. My seven months assignment to the Congo mission had temporarily suspended my posting as Chief of the Division of Social Affairs of CEPAL, a job into which I had just begun to immerse myself with enthusiasm, but also with some trepidation, when the Congo call interrupted my effort. I had been warned during my briefing at Headquarters in January 1960 that my job in Santiago would be difficult. CEPAL was then engaged in a high-visibility intellectual exploration of the economic forces shaping the fate of the region. Under the active leadership of Raul Prebisch, a team of distinguished economists was conducting a critical analysis of the Latin American economic scene and putting together the elements of the conceptual thinking that would soon become known on a world-wide basis as development economics. Receiving little attention, the Division of Social Affairs had up to then essentially concentrated its activities on problems of social welfare and community development. In spite of the statutory concern of the Commission for "the social aspects of economic development", the position of the Division had been quite marginal in the boiling kettle of ideas which CEPAL had become at the hand of the economists. This was well known in New York, and my brief from Julia Henderson had been clear and simple : try to somehow make the work of the Commission

more responsive to the social side of the development problems of the region.

Our sophisticated economists obviously would have to be met on their own ground if we were to have a chance to awaken their interest in the social side of development. Two wedges allowed us to initiate such a dialogue. In the highly mathematics-based and model-oriented working environment of our colleagues on the economic side, demography became the first social dimension which retained their attention. We had the privilege of having in Santiago CELADE, the Latin American Centre for Demography, and in our Division successively two brilliant demographers. When we were able to give to the CEPAL Advisory Group for Colombia credible and detailed demographic projections for that country, worked out with analytical tools with which they were familiar and passing the test of the critical appraisal to which they were subjected, the economists for the first time looked upon the Division of Social Affairs as a useful resource for their work.

The other wedge, i.e., the planning of the social sectors, did not immediately take the form of a contribution to the work of the economists, but it opened with them a useful and promising area of dialogue. Economic planning was receiving at the time very considerable attention in CEPAL. Sophisticated conceptual work was being carried out in this regard and direct assistance was extended to countries in the region to develop their national plans. Instruments were at hand for this purpose at the macro-economic level as well as in respect of all major economic sectors. Education and health, however, were also sectors which accounted for very large outlays in public

expenditure and they could not be left unattended in a comprehensive approach to national planning. We were thus asked about the methodology for the planning of those sectors. We did not have the answer, but we were able to focus together on the problems involved. The resources of UNESCO and WHO were tapped, and a useful area of collaboration could develop between the economic and the social sides of the Commission. I later came to refer to demography and the planning of the social sectors as the two Trojan Horses which allowed for the Division of Social Affairs to penetrate the fortress of the CEPAL economists.

## **23. Don Raúl Prebisch**

I met Raúl Prebisch for the first time in January 1960. He was in Santiago when I arrived to report as Chief of the Social Affairs Division of CEPAL, and he received me right away. I mentioned to him - it was obvious - that while his French was much better than my Spanish, I would like to use Spanish in our conversation, because I thought it would be important for my insertion in the retinue to express myself in that language. He readily agreed, which reflected a specific Latino attitude that I have since often observed with great interest. It is quite different from the mentality of the French, who are generally so terribly particular about the purity of their language that they hate hearing somebody speaking French badly. It may be a stereotype, but it is certainly my experience that as soon as you try to speak Spanish with a Latino, he is very prepared to encourage you to do so.

Prebisch was a very impressive man. He was in our first meeting very kind and very gentle. He told me of his disappointment with the past performance of the Division of Social Affairs and of his expectations for the future. I then saw him in Santiago alone only sporadically, but very often and regularly in staff meetings. One of the things which soon impressed me very much in Prebisch was his ability to work with a team, in the sense of extracting from his senior staff all that was possible to extract. He was the absolute antithesis of so many bosses I have known. He always wanted to have around him people throwing ideas at him. He would then in conclusion articulately formulate his own views. But this ability to listen to people, this constant keenness to know what other people thought, has been for me a fascinating thing to observe, both in Santiago and then, of course, later in UNCTAD where I worked with him for nearly three years.

Jumping ahead in my narrative, let me complete this presentation of Prebisch as a man by recording here with illustrations from my UNCTAD days my unlimited admiration for his extraordinary intellectual ability and capacity to concentrate. I have more than once quoted my experience with those boring general debates which are part of the ritual of the UNCTAD conferences. Ministers come and deliver their prepared statements, which are often at least in part meant to address public opinion back home. While none of his staff could keep track of all that was being said, Prebisch was capable of sitting for three hours in the morning, three hours in the afternoon, and listen with attention to each and every word which was being uttered. The next morning, in the senior staff

meeting, he would say "You remember, the French delegate, about two-thirds into his speech, said that and that. Why don't you go and ask him what he meant. Is that linked with this and this?" And so on for the whole of the debate of the previous day. He had registered each and every point which had been made. That ability reflected an intellectual capacity which is incredible.

Here is another illustration. In the early years of UNCTAD, Prebisch's speeches were an event in town, people would come to the public gallery just to listen to him. One day, he told us in the staff meeting that he would need an hour and a half to deliver the next day a major policy speech. We impressed upon him that even he could not speak at such length. He then asked us what would be the maximum time we considered acceptable to maintain the audience attentive. We said an hour and a quarter was about as much as we thought to be tolerable coming from him, way beyond the normal individual attention span. The next morning, Prebisch entered the room with his hands in the pockets of his jacket, and he spoke for one hour and fourteen minutes ! It was obvious that he concentrated into an hour and fourteen minutes, knowing exactly the time it would take, all that he had previously felt he needed an hour and a half to say. Prebisch most often delivered his major speeches with no notes whatsoever. Occasionally but not often, he would put in front of him a little piece of paper, but start to speak without looking at it. Then at the fifty-fifth minute of the speech, he would take the paper and read a quote illustrating a point he was making, and put it back. It was all set up in advance in his mind. He truly had an extraordinary intellectual capacity. This talent evokes for me the music maestro who conducts by heart a Mahler symphony, or the chess champion

who wins ten simultaneous games. They obviously have something in their mind which the common man does not possess. Prebisch, in his way, was that kind of an exceptional person. He has been in my whole career the boss for whom I developed the greatest admiration. He was very humane too, a very open and warm personality. He was as is well known a bon vivant. He had for a while an apartment at la Pelouse, the villa in the park of the Palais des Nations. We had there from time to time, in particular during crises, consultations which were very well provided with excellent wine.

So much for Don Raúl Prebisch as a man. To Prebisch as a thinker, as a pioneering economist and as the black sheep of the conventional establishment, I shall revert when my narrative reaches the years of my involvement in the North-South dialogue.

## **24. Burocratic rigidity**

During the whole duration of my posting in CEPAL, I had the privilege of having on the staff of my Division Jose Media Echavarria, one of the most prominent living Latin American sociologists. He had been part of the group of Spanish intellectuals who had found refuge in Mexico at the end of the Spanish Civil War. A penetrating analyst of the social scene as well as a brilliant conceptualist, he had published a number of studies which had earned him respect and admiration. He was greatly appreciated in CEPAL by his colleagues across the secretariat, and Raul Prebisch used to enjoy his conversation as an intellectual partner. He had declined the post of Director of

the Division of Social Affairs because he was not prepared to deal with the administrative chores associated with the function. Indicative of his independence of mind and broad vision, it is at his suggestion that we proposed to the Commission in 1961 that next to the item on the social aspects of economic development, it include in its work programme a study on the political factors that may affect development. As could be expected, the proposal was shot down in flames; though nobody could have the slightest doubt about the utmost relevancy of the subject.

Inexorably the day came when I was asked to produce a periodic appraisal report on that staff member of my Division. The report consisted at the time of a set of behavioural parameters for each of which a performance rating was requested by checking one of several boxes. Having gone time and again at length through the form, I concluded that exceptional circumstances required an exceptional approach. I returned blank the report form, under cover of an explanatory memorandum in which I stated that I was finding it inappropriate to cast the performance of Jose Maria Echavarria in terms of our routine approach to staff appraisal. He was an outstanding scholar whose presence among us could only enhance the credit and the image of CEPAL and it would be proper to just recognize him as such. I would have great difficulty in entering into a micro-analysis of the behaviour of a man whom I could only properly address as Mon Maître.

Alas, it didn't work. The Director of Administration of CEPAL called me and indicated that while he was personally in sympathy with my position, he was bound to point out that our

system being what it was, in any but the most proximate context the absence of reporting would be ascribed to the necessity to hide something from the record, and would thus weigh as a negative element for the staff member concerned. In the face of that argument, I had no choice but to comply and I dutifully filled the boxes of Jose Medina Echavarria's periodic performance report. I deeply regretted, however, that our bureaucratic rigidity could not allow for an appropriate treatment of this exceptional case.

## **25. Roaming in South America**

CEPAL being a regional organization, its senior staff is naturally called upon to visit the countries of the region in relation to the work programme of the Commission. I thus did have the opportunity to visit during my assignment in Santiago most countries of South America, many of them several times. The Mexico Office of CEPAL being in charge of Central America, it is to Mexico City that I travelled as needed on matters concerning that sub-region. It is only later, on the occasion of other assignments or as a tourist mostly with my wife, that I visited Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama.

My first trip for CEPAL outside Chile was to Argentina soon after my return from the Congo. The International Labour Organization (ILO) held in April 1961 a Latin American Regional Conference in Buenos Aires, and it was considered appropriate that CEPAL be represented at that gathering by its senior social affairs official. This was the first of a number of

visits to Argentina during the following three years to attend seminars, workshops or conferences, as that country was for numerous entities a preferred location for holding meetings. Argentine hospitality was warm and generous, more than once, as I remember, in the form of a superb Sunday asado in an estancia in the country out of Buenos Aires, with delicious local meat and excellent Mendoza wine. My last official trip to Argentina during my time in Santiago took place in May 1963 to attend the Tenth Session of CEPAL held in Mar del Plata. Sessions of the full Commission were a rather big affair held only once every two years, and a fair segment of the Secretariat moved to the Atlantic coast sea resort to ensure the servicing of the meeting. I was back in Argentina only two months later, that time together with my wife and children. We spent early in July a few days as tourists in Buenos Aires before embarking on the ship Julio Cesar for Cannes on transfer of duty station to the Middle East.

It was again the International Labour Organization which afforded me the opportunity to first visit late in 1961 three other countries in South America, i.e., Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador. The ILO was running at the time in those countries a major technical co-operation venture known as the Andean Programme. An Assistant Director General of ILO, Abbas Amar, and a member of his staff were to inspect the Project, and CEPAL was invited to detach a senior official to accompany them. We started from La Paz by road and drove from place to place all the way to Quito, visiting the various local projects which had been set up in a string of locations on the Altiplano and further North in the heart of the Andes. Within the framework of a comprehensive approach to community development, most such projects centred on

vocational training. ILO had raised considerable interest in this venture among trade unions in developed countries, and several of the training workshops exhibited sophisticated modern equipment in plumbing, auto mechanics or carpentry, all gifts from European workers' organizations. One could not avoid the feeling that the whole approach was oversized and somewhat extravagant in relation to the economic situation and social fabric of the environment in which the projects had been located. Indeed, it would appear that quite a number of former trainees from the region had soon moved as workers to the modern sector of coastal towns where income was for them much more attractive than would have been the case in their rural highlands community. This mission also gave me the opportunity to know well Abbas Amar, a strong and hard working personality who at the same time also was kind and humane. I shall never forget the moment at which, during our stopover in Cuzco, he crashed the door of a family wedding party in what appeared to be a lower middle class apartment. Introducing himself as "just a tourist", he insisted that he wished to look at the dancing and listen to the music. Hospitality obliged, and we were allowed inside. We did not stay very long, but thoroughly enjoyed this experience afforded us by Abbas Amar's benevolent uncivility.

CEPAL was at the time very actively involved in Bolivia. In addition to the advisory services it provided for the orientation of the economic policies of the Government and the preparation of a development plan, it also ran a training course on the basics of development economics for Ministry officials. I was asked in 1962 to open a new segment in this training by giving in La Paz a series of lectures on what was then called the social aspects of economic development. The lectures were

to be delivered in the Spanish language, a task which I had some difficulty to master. It also gave me the opportunity to meet Joan Margaret Anstee, who was then the UNDP Resident Representative in Bolivia. This was her first job as head of mission in what would be an exemplary successful career as a senior United Nations official. Her performance in Bolivia was already exceptional. She ensured CEPAL's interface with the Government on a daily basis and developed a climate of confidence of such quality that she was invited to sit at Cabinet meetings, so had it the rumour, when economic matters came for discussion. Her very varied career culminated as Under-Secretary-General representing the United Nations in the Angola crisis. She always cherished Bolivia, however, where she retired on the shores of Lake Titicaca.

Lima deserves a special mention as a point of call for travelling CEPAL officials. There was at the time no direct airline connection between Santiago and La Paz, and entry into Bolivia was taking place from the Peruvian capital. We thus often had to stay overnight in Lima on the way from or to Santiago, with flight schedules not always reliable. This gave me the opportunity to come to know already then rather well the centre of Lima, a city to which I would return for an extended stay in 1970. The airport of La Paz lies 4,070 meters above sea level, and the DC-4 aircraft in use on the route from Lima had individual pipes dispensing oxygen in front of every cabin seat for the comfort of passengers during the crossing of the Andes. Some sophisticated airlines were serving coca tea to passengers upon disembarking, which would be a big help. CEPAL advice to its staff was simple. We should check in our hotel and lay in bed for a few hours upon arrival, whereupon we would be able to function normally. So I did and I never

was assaulted by the soroche, the famous altitude headache common in the Andes. On the other hand, I must confess that getting down often left me somewhat groggy for a few hours in Lima.

The involvement of CEPAL in Colombia was equally intense, and as recounted earlier gave me the opportunity to bring the social sector closer to the preoccupations of the economists. My visits there, as well as to Ecuador and Peru, were however less frequent. Some years earlier the Division of Social Affairs at Headquarters, on its own initiative, had launched in the last two countries community development projects as part of its technical assistance programme. We ensured that our activities were taking into account all pre-existing United Nations projects in the social field in South America. My first visit to Brazil, on the other hand, was a disappointment. We were keen to be involved in the development of the Nordeste region, for the stimulation of which the Central Government in Brasilia had set up a huge institutional mechanism. Celso Furtado, who had been one of the most prominent thinkers on Prebisch's side in the early years of CEPAL, was the Head of that project. Strengthened by the enthusiasm for the idea of Medina Echavarria, I desperately tried to obtain a personal meeting with Furtado, alas to no avail. His constant movement from Brasilia to Recife and back made it impossible for him to accommodate my request. My distinguished colleague however kept his eyes on Brazil. Early in 1963, he told me that he had spotted a bright and promising young Brazilian and asked me whether we could give him a six-months consultancy contract to work on one of our projects. I readily agreed. Enrique Cardoso thus spent six months as a junior consultant in CEPAL. Bright and promising indeed ! He was forty years later

elected President of Brazil, a position he held immediately before Lula.

Our relations with New York were excellent. Headquarters was obviously very pleased with the inroads made by the social sector in the thinking and activities of CEPAL. On a tour of the region, Julia Henderson invited me in the spring of 1962 to accompany her in a first visit to Paraguay, a country then isolated and quite remote from the South American mainstream. We boarded plane in Rio de Janeiro, saw the extraordinarily booming city of Curitiba from the air, experienced the frustration of stopping over at Iguazu airport without ever having the chance of a glance at the waterfalls, and reached Asunción after an uneventful trip. Our meetings with Government officials went smoothly, with perhaps only on our part some surprise at the numerous references incessantly made by our interlocutors to the President, General Stroessner, benefactor of the State. The sense of isolation of Paraguay from the outside world came vividly alive for us on a Saturday, the day of our departure for Buenos Aires. A fairly thick fog packed up the airport. With the arrival of our Panagra flight overdue, an announcement on the waiting lounge loudspeaker informed us that the plane had to skip its stopover in Asunción due to the weather condition, and asked all passengers to contact the airline counter to reschedule their flight. We were then offered seats on the next Panagra flight, which was due on the next Tuesday, in three days' time. We were rather stunned by the casualness of the offer. We had meetings scheduled in Buenos Aires for Monday, and we immediately started to explore alternative possibilities to proceed. A local carrier finally landed us the same evening in the Northern Argentine city of Corrientes, and whence the

national airline to the capital. It is on the occasion of another trip to Paraguay that I experienced the need to detach myself from a natural tendency to Euro-centrism. Being afflicted in Asunción by a slight headache, I entered a pharmacy and asked for aspirin. National, or imported, asked the pharmacist. On answering : imported, I was served an aspirin made in Argentina. I am not proud of the fact that I was at first surprised.

On the eve of independence in June 1962, the administering authorities of Jamaica called for a Conference on Social Development. With a broad agenda, the gathering was meant to identify reference points for the evolution of the society and the development of social services in the new-born country, which was to be declared independent two months later. CEPAL was invited to participate in the Conference and it was decided that it should be represented by the Director of its Social Affairs Division. I thus attended the meeting during three full days. I had the occasion of making several interventions on subjects with which CEPAL was dealing. The Conference was receiving considerable attention in the public at large, and I was interviewed at length in the national broadcasting programme. Attention to the Caribbean sub-region being generally entrusted to CEPAL's Mexico Office, however, this was the only time I visited that part of the continent in an official capacity during my assignment in Santiago.

Venezuela and the Guayanans were the only places in South America I never visited during my stay in CEPAL. The first caught up on me at the end of my career. As for the second, a UNITAR training course in Paramaribo, capital of Suriname,

after retirement has been the only occasion for me to ever set foot in what had been the Guayanas.

## **VI. Back in the Middle East**

### **26. Returning to the Middle East**

I was happily immersed in my CEPAL activity when, in the late Spring of 1963, I was once more approached about my willingness to take yet another assignment in order to assist in a situation faced by the Organization. The call this time came from Philippe de Seynes, the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, who at the same time also approached Prebisch asking him whether he would be willing to release me for this new job. A director in de Seynes' Department, Julia Henderson had of course been consulted about this démarche.

The United Nations was at the time facing a difficult situation in the Middle East in respect of its economic activities. Economic commissions created to stimulate economic development through co-operation at the regional level had been set up in the early years of the Organization in Europe, in Asia and in Latin America, and in 1958 in Africa on the wake of the accession to independence of many territories of that continent. The Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE), later called Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), extended Westwards up to Iran. This left the Arab countries of the Middle East without any institutional structure of their own, and considerable pressure had developed on their part for creating a Commission for that region. It was for them evident, however, that Israel

would not be invited to participate in that new Commission, and their request was deadlocked by the principle of the universality of participation on an equal basis of all Member countries in all inter-governmental bodies of the United Nations. Like Article 2, paragraph 7 of the Charter on non intervention in the internal affairs of a Member State, this principle was then much more strictly adhered to than would be the case later in the life of the Organization. In point of fact, a meeting of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) invited to meet in Tunis had been in 1961 re-scheduled to gather at ECA Headquarters in Addis Ababa because of the refusal by the Government of Tunisia to grant visas to Israeli representatives to attend the meeting as observers.

In order to give within this limitation some satisfaction to the Arab States of the Middle East, de Seynes had conceived of an ingenious formula. An office would be established in Beirut to service the region, albeit not as an inter-governmental machinery, but as an outpost of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat. This office would be located in the region and would carry out some activities at the regional level, offering thus a sort of first approximation to what could one day become the secretariat of an economic commission. Headquarters' Division of Social Affairs had already some people out-posted in Beirut. The idea was that while exercising economic and social functions, the new office would be clearly cast as a branch of the Secretariat, thus avoiding the stumbling-block of the principle of universality of participation in inter-governmental bodies.

It is in search of a senior official to head what would be known

as the United Nations Economic and Social Office in Beirut (UNESOB) that de Seynes approached me. Why would he think of me for the job ? First, I suppose, because I am Swiss. At the time, it was a good nationality for Middle East affairs. I also knew the region fairly well. I had been assigned there twice already, in Lebanon the whole of 1956 and two years in Palestine in 1958-59. And last but not least, I had been working in a regional commission. So I assume there were basically three factors, i.e., knowledge of the region, nationality, and having already worked at the regional level, which made de Seynes ask Prebisch if he could have me back for the job. In the face of the importance which he attached to the matter, Prebisch agreed. As for me, except for my seven months in the Congo, I had been in Santiago for three and a half years. So from the point of view of rotation, it was not unreasonable to expect me to accept this new assignment, even as I was still fully enjoying my work in CEPAL. We thus left Santiago in July on transfer of duty station and took home leave in Switzerland. For the first time, we had come to the conclusion that formal education may under some circumstances have to be given priority over family unity. Our eldest son Daniel was left in the Collège Protestant Romand in Founex, near Geneva. Marg and our two other children reached Beirut with me before the end of September.

## **27. New responsibilities in the field of economics**

Choosing me as Director of UNESOB was on the part of de Seynes a daring move, insofar as he put me in charge of an office which would have both a social section and an economic

section, in a context in which economics clearly enjoyed more visibility and attention than social affairs. It surely was well known to him that I had acquired my grasp of current economics only by osmosis. I had often astonished people by mentioning that I had had during the War six hours a week of economics as the main branch in the first year of law studies in Geneva, but this had been a very long time ago, and the discipline has undergone since then a tremendous evolution with the emergence of development economics. My accepting the post was not, however, to my mind an irresponsible decision. I shared with de Seynes a vision of the role of the Head of a team of intellectuals, whatever the field, which is unfortunately rare in international bureaucracies. So many times have I illustrated my thinking on the matter : if you need a leader for a team of ten economists, the natural tendency of so many institutions will be to look for an eleventh economist somehow brighter than the ten others, and put him in charge. This will very often be a recipe for disaster, as the leader will have a natural tendency to concentrate on making his views prevail. What you need is a leader who will see as his major role to extract the best of the ten existing brains, and exercise his judgement in providing a synthesis of the views that have been expressed. We chose as the head of the economic section a very seasoned economist from Headquarters in the person of Basim Hannush and we recruited a few bright graduates in the region. I felt that I was thus in the position of fully facing my responsibility as Director of UNESOB by giving expression to the collective wisdom of my team of economists. On the social side, a number of officials were already posted in Beirut as technical co-operation experts and involved in various projects in the region, and they formed the hard core of the Social Section of UNESOB.

## **28. Learning to live with unsolved problems**

When I took up my assignment in Beirut, one of my first tasks was to visit Addis Ababa to review with the Economic Commission for Africa a problem of common concern. The United Nations had organized since the Fifties a series of Seminars for the Arab States on a variety of subjects in the social field which had been regularly attended by some Arab States from North Africa. Now that UNESOB had been set up as a regional office to service the countries of the Middle East, was it to pursue this activity on the same format or would ECA have a different view of the matter.

The Executive Secretary of ECA, Robert Gardiner, received me very courteously. At the same time, his reaction to my presentation of the problem was nothing short of icy. Indeed, he expressly stated that he wished that I had not brought the subject up at all. The dilemma it posed to him was not susceptible of resolution. If he were to indicate his willingness to see UNESOB continue to organize social affairs seminars in accordance with the formula used hitherto, he would be immediately accused of undermining African unity. If on the other hand he suggested that the formula be discontinued, he would be as quickly accused of sapping Arab unity and desire to work together. The matter should thus be allowed to rest without definition for the time being, and events would have to take their course in the future. I thus returned to Beirut with an unsolved problem on my hands, to which many more would soon be added. The experience, however, was a very positive one for me and the lesson well taken. Eagerness for solving

problems is an undoubted quality, but as my visit to ECA illustrated, it is also important to accept to live with problems that cannot or should not be solved.

## **29. Persona non grata**

Beyond its formal description and administrative status as an outpost of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, UNESOB had been established in a markedly political context. This Office was giving in the region some presence and visibility to the economic and social side of the United Nations. While unrelenting in their claim for the creation of an Economic Commission for the Middle East, the Arab Governments had warmly welcomed the establishment of UNESOB. The limitations of this move were obvious, however. As a branch of the Secretariat, the Beirut Office was supposed to service all countries of the region, including Israel.

As part of its research work programme, UNESOB had been instructed to prepare a survey of economic developments in the Middle East for presentation to ECOSOC. Parallel to similar efforts in the Arab States of the region, I arranged through the UNTAB Office in Israel for a visit to that country at the beginning of 1964 for the purpose of collecting material for the survey. Julia Henderson, who was touring the region at the time, had been invited to visit Israel and we proceeded together in mid-February to the New City of Jerusalem through Mandelbaum Gate. To our surprise, the agenda for our visit prepared by the Israeli authorities and handed to us at the TAB Office included for the next morning a meeting in Tel Aviv

with the Minister of Foreign Affairs. No such meeting had been solicited by either Julia Henderson or me, and we anticipated that it would be in the nature of a courtesy call.

When we reached Tel Aviv the next morning, it became immediately clear that the purpose of the meeting was to present Israel's position in respect of the Beirut Office. Golda Meir received us with an outburst of recrimination against any attempt at depriving Israel in any way of full equality of treatment with other Member States in the activities of the United Nations. Dwelling at length with the discrimination and persecution of which the Jewish people had been the object throughout history, she declared that with independence finally achieved, Israel could not any more accept any discriminatory treatment whatsoever. It would thus have to subordinate co-operation of any kind with the Beirut Office to the recognition and full respect in practice of its right of access to that Office on equal footing with other countries. Should Arab countries be unwilling to change their position on the matter, it would be imperative for the United Nations to relocate UNESOB in a country to which all Member States would have access.

I explained to the Foreign Minister that irrespective of the principles involved the discussion of which had to take place in New York, the formula retained by the United Nations had precisely the aim to ensure, under difficult political circumstances, equality of treatment in practical terms among all countries of the region. The terms of reference of UNESOB did not include the convening of inter-governmental meetings, but only research and the backstopping of technical cooperation activities. Those activities were carried out when necessary by visits of Beirut Office staff to the countries - such

as the one which had brought me to Israel. Visits to Beirut of Government officials was not a method of operation used by the Office to carry out its duties.

The meeting lasted close to two hours and the Foreign Minister remained absolutely inflexible. Israel could not be led on this issue by practical considerations. As long as the principle of equality of treatment in the form of free access for Israeli officials to the Beirut Office would not be fully recognized and tested, the Israeli Government would have nothing to do with UNESOB. My presence in Israel as Director of that Office was thus undesirable and I was to refrain in that capacity from any contact whatsoever with Government officials. With as much courtesy as she could then muster, she added that I would be welcome to remain in the country as a tourist.

### **30. UNESOB confirmed by the General Assembly**

It was not clear during our meeting whether Golda Meir's point that the United Nations should move the Office out of Beirut was a posture on principle or whether she genuinely felt that there was a chance that such a move be decided in New York. In point of fact, I had been warned by de Seynes before accepting my assignment that depending upon the evolution of the issue before the General Assembly, we might have to move the Office to Cyprus. This had not deterred me from accepting the job, though I earnestly hoped that our settling in Beirut would last for the duration of this new Middle East venture. The matter came to the acid test at the Nineteenth Session of

the General Assembly in September of 1964. The specific point at issue was whether the Assembly would accept that the Secretariat have an outposted office operate in Beirut without Israel having the right of access to it. It revealed the incapacity of Israel and its Western allies to prevail on the question of principle over the political determination of the Arab States to develop closer co-operation among themselves. The General Assembly refused to challenge the decision to establish UNESOB, and the Office remained in Beirut.

The process thus set in motion would take eight years to mature. It was completed in 1973 with the creation of the Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA), a fully-fledged inter-governmental body similar in status to the existing commissions in the other regions. Israel was not invited to join ESCWA, however. The General Assembly thus formally set aside the principle of universality of participation of Member States in the inter-governmental activities of the Organization. That UNESOB would be a forerunner of ESCWA was undoubtedly clear from the beginning in the minds of Arab delegates who were pushing in that direction. But at the time I was Director of the Beirut Office, United Nations Secretariat officials, whatever their position, would not have wanted to express themselves on the matter. This evolution gave food for thought on a point which fascinated me at the time in respect of the question of Palestine. Ever since 1964, even before the Six Day War, you had a complete dichotomy between the loss of grip by the Israelis on the diplomatic scene in New York, and their constantly increasing power on the ground. Israel was becoming weaker and weaker in the General Assembly, where it was very isolated, often left with the support of only the United States. But that constant

weakening on the diplomatic scene was accompanied by a very strong spreading of its power in the reality of the terrain. The divergence between those two trends did for a long time interest me as a notable aspect of the conflict, alas indicative of the loss of weight of the United Nations in world affairs.

### **31. Cast as quasi-Executive Secretary for the Middle East**

De Seynes right from the beginning decided that the Director of the Beirut Office should participate in all activities, including formal meetings of the Executive Secretaries of the economic commissions which were being held regularly either in New York or in Geneva. He half-jokingly, but very warmly, always referred to me as the "quasi - Executive Secretary for the Middle East." This is how I was projected into the circle of top United Nations officials, in a position that was quite unusual for my grade. Those people were Under-Secretaries-General (USG) and Assistant-Secretaries-General (ASG), and here was I sitting, as a P-5 and then D-1 official, participating in activities at a level which was quite different from the one corresponding to my actual grade. This was quite exceptional from the point of view of the United Nations bureaucracy, but just an aspect of the complex situation the Organization was facing in the Middle East. My nice sounding quasi-title was anyway used only informally within the inner circle of the United Nations family. In Beirut and in the region, I was the Director of UNESOB.

Participating in the regular meetings of Executive Secretaries

during almost three years has been for me a most instructive experience of unique quality. The reporting by everyone on developments in his region was in itself a rich source of information. Those meetings also gave me a deep insight à chaud in the working of the huge international and multicultural machinery called the United Nations Secretariat. The regulation and management of power sharing between New York and the regional Headquarters hardly involved UNESOB, but I was a privileged witness of all discussions that were taking place in this regard, concerning both substantive and administrative matters. Fascinating was also the cultural specificity of the approach on the issues at hand displayed by each of my distinguished colleagues from Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa. The hospitality of de Seynes on the occasion of those meetings was always very generous and afforded the development of informal contacts which I greatly appreciated. I had the privilege of being received in that group at par with the others, with my past experience as legal adviser in the Middle East and in the Congo probably playing a role in my profile in the eyes of the Executive Secretaries.

## **32. Working in Beirut and in the region**

Our relations with the countries of the region were to be those deemed appropriate for an international secretariat. They were thus to essentially consist in gathering information for economic and social analysis and giving support to technical co-operation projects. It was soon felt, however, that in a region which had been up to then largely left at the margin of multilateral economic co-operation, a thorough stock assessment of the conditions in the various countries was

necessary. The moment being in the thinking throughout the Organization that of a fixation on planning as the basic tool for harnessing development, it was decided at Headquarters to mount a reconnaissance mission on development planning in the Middle East. Given the intended practical use to be made of the findings of the mission, it was decided that it should be carried out by staff from within the United Nations Secretariat, and I was asked to be the Head of the project. Six countries were visited by the mission between April and July 1964, i.e., Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Syria. The report of the mission, counting more than 250 pages, offered an analysis of the situation in each of those countries followed by an exploration of avenues for regional action and it was completed by a large apparatus of statistical tables.

This important venture involved equally the economic and the social sides of the Office, and it provided an important incentive for the consolidation of UNESOB as a dynamic and forward-looking entity. It had created a shared sense of commitment of a lasting nature, and the atmosphere in the office remained on the whole pleasant throughout my stay. It was hardly troubled for a while by the conflicting pretension of two equally qualified members of the Social Section to be formally designated as Chief of that Section. Their administrative status did not offer any clue in the matter and there was no way in which the contention could be fairly settled. It was for me the opportunity to heed Gardiner's advice, and I decided to postpone action and to live with an unsolved problem. The general service staff of the Office was of first rate quality, and my driver Joseph particularly devoted and efficient at all times and in all circumstances. He claimed to know everybody in Beirut and gave us the occasion to prove it. Car

traffic and parking was very difficult in the city, and Marg was once caught finding an illegal parking ticket on the windshield of our car. She was somewhat upset, because we always wished in all our duty stations to strictly observe the regulations of the host country. She mentioned the matter to Joseph who stretched his arm toward the ticket and replied in his somewhat broken but perfectly fluent French : "Ça fait rien, Madame, tu me donnes. J'ai un ami il déchire."

In respect of development planning so very high in United Nations priorities, I was asked a few months after the publication of the report of our reconnaissance mission to join a senior consultant headed for Kuwait to explore the feasibility of setting up there a regional planning institute for the Middle East. I was at the same time thrilled and somewhat diffident. Thrilled because the senior consultant was to be Sir Robert Jackson. I had heard a lot about him and in particular his role in the very early years of the United Nations, and I was looking very much forward to meet him personally. Diffident, because the position of junior partner in a high level mission is most of the time ungrateful as the workhorse of the team, and I did not know, after all, Jackson's temperament and working habits. It was fully dark when our direct flight from Beirut landed at Kuwait Airport, and the temperature was still 41 degrees centigrade. After our first round of meetings the next day, we had taken refuge from the heat in our hotel and agreed to meet late afternoon after a rest for "cold tea". In this strictly dry country, even in a hotel patronized essentially by foreigners beer was served from a tea pot into tea cups. I was ready for an exchange about our first contacts and for Jackson's guidance as to how he wished them to be reflected in our report. He appeared with some papers in his hand, and to my utter

amazement he started to read from his own handwriting a full draft covering all aspects of our mission so far. This for the purpose, he said, of eliciting my comments and adjusting the draft accordingly. Our mission successfully followed its course and I was back in Beirut as scheduled. It is well known in United Nations circles that mission work often brings in a few days people together in bonds that are much more difficult to establish at Headquarters. I developed with Jackson in Kuwait a lasting friendship of which I have been proud. We did not have later many opportunities to be together, but I fondly remember some very pleasant lunches with him in New York at Joan Anstee's Lower East Side apartment. And I keep a vivid memory of a dinner which Marg and I hosted in our home at Rue Michel-Chauvet in Geneva, attended also by Bradford Morse and Joan Anstee, during which Jackson among other reminiscences told us of his face to face meetings with Staline personally during the War, when he was based in Malta and dealing with the provision of Allied supplies to the USSR.

My position as Director of UNESOB called for me to often visit some countries of the region, less frequently some others. I had the privilege of participating in the regional seminar on the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders toward the planning of which I had worked during my assignment in Lebanon in 1956 before the project had been suspended indefinitely in the wake of the Suez crisis. The event took place in Damascus, and UNESOB was actively involved in its preparation and organization. Jordan and Syria were particularly involved in relations with our regional office, in good part because they had a fairly large programme of technical co-operation of which we ensured the backstopping. Contacts in Jordan invariably took place in Amman, but I

slipped into Jerusalem whenever possible to visit again the places to which I had become so attached during my assignment with UNTSO. Our relations with Syria were fairly close, and the road run from Beirut to Damascus was for me familiar. Unfortunately from the point of view of family life, the difference in calendar between Lebanon and Syria too often deprived us of a week-end together. The close of the working week on Friday night in Beirut (and in UNESOB) was immediately followed on Saturday morning by the start of the working week in Damascus. I never made a count of the days of rest I lost on that account during my assignment at UNESOB.

It also sometimes happened in Damascus that an event would be marked by a reception, to which I would often be invited with my wife. I generally excused Marg who was involved with the children in Beirut in my absence. On one occasion when she agreed to attend, I had been in Damascus for some days and she joined me by car on the day of the event. I had taken as usual a room in Hotel Semiramis, at the time the best hotel in Damascus, and I was flabbergasted when the chief floor attendant vehemently opposed Marg entering my room invoking the prohibition of lewd behaviour in the hotel. Neither our assurances of the legitimacy of our sharing a room, nor even the display of our respective passports carrying the same family name, made him relent from his moralistic stand. It needed the personal intervention of the manager of the hotel for the matter to be settled and Marg to be allowed to use my room for a change of clothes for the reception.

### **33. The United Nations a world away**

The decision of de Seynes to invite the Director of UNESOB to the meetings of Executive Secretaries of the regional economic commissions, as well as, current affairs, brought me rather often to Headquarters and allowed me to keep in touch with the pulse of the Organization. It gave me in particular the opportunity to meet those of us who had lived the Congo experience. We shared for years an obsessive common concern about the fate of that operation and followed keenly both its evolution and the perspective it gained as recent history. Hence our interest in Connor Cruise O'Brian's book "To Katanga and Back". It had made quite a bang and was the topic of the day about the Congo, and it was being passionately commented by both those who had read it and those who had not.

I decided to buy the book and one late evening on leaving the Secretariat entered the Doubleday Book shop located on the left side at the Lexington Avenue entrance of Grand Central Station which old timers will certainly remember. To my question as to whether they carried that title, the salesman snappily asked me : "Is that fiction, Sir ?". He could not have appreciated how funny his question was, and I just answered : "Maybe in part, but you would rather have it under Current Affairs". After a perfunctory look on some shelves, he yelled across the store to a colleague who was working in the back of the store: "Do we have something called "To Katanga and back ?" Loud and clear came the answer : "Why don't you look in the Travel Section."

I left the shop in a very ambivalent mood. On the one hand, I

regretted not having got hold of the book which had haunted my conversations with friends and colleagues ever since I had arrived in New York. On the other hand, a peculiar sense of relief and elation unexpectedly overwhelmed me. Here I was, barely half-a-mile away from United Nations Headquarters, finding a presumably intellectual milieu - a book shop, after all - completely, fully and absolutely disconnected from our major preoccupations, if not even possibly from our very existence as an Organization. There was, after all, also a life beyond the United Nations. Immersed in a career marked by a succession of pressure job assignments, this came to me as a blessed reminder that my professional involvement should not overshadow the broader dimension of life.

### **34. Again needed for another job, and an interim arrangement**

I spent the whole of 1964 and the beginning of 1965 immersed in my UNESOB assignment and enjoying the opening it afforded me on the world of the United Nations at large. I had observed closely the dynamic politics of the Arab push which had led to the creation and then the consolidation of UNESOB. Being greatly interested in Middle East affairs, I was looking forward to seeing how the matter would further unfold. The participation in the meetings of Executive Secretaries of regional commissions was always stimulating, and the affairs of the Office for which I was responsible put me in relation with a variety of services at Headquarters. In addition, I had established contact with a number of specialized agencies which had field staff posted in the region.

In April 1964, tragedy struck my family. We had invited my parents to spend some time visiting us in Beirut. My father fell ill and died rather suddenly after only a few hours of hospitalization. I flew back to Geneva for the funerals which were organized by my brother. Before leaving to return to Beirut by way of Rome where I had an appointment at FAO, I went to the Palais des Nations to pay my respects to Don Raúl Prebisch, Secretary-General of the first UNCTAD Conference which was at the time in full swing in Geneva. I had kept myself informed about the UNCTAD I debates in general terms, without fully realizing that it was sealing the North-South fracture that was to dominate the life of the United Nations for the following nearly twenty years. My visit was a courtesy call to a former boss I had greatly respected and admired, without any thought of alluding to the question of my professional future. And indeed Prebisch received me warmly and showed great interest in what I was doing in my job in the Middle East, but without any indication of any design he might have about my future services.

I thought back a lot about that conversation in the Spring of 1965, when I learned that Prebisch had approached de Seynes and asked him whether he could have me back from Beirut as Secretary of the Trade and Development Board which had been created by the UNCTAD Conference. Had he already then had in mind to invite me to join his new team, but had refrained to mention it because courtesy called for him to first talk to de Seynes? Or did I enter his plans at a later date in 1964 ? Be it as it may, upon de Seynes' positive response en principe, I was brought into the picture and as the principal interested party,

kept fully abreast of the arrangement he negotiated with Prebisch. As a true gentleman, de Seynes was prepared to respond positively to Prebisch who was embattled in the difficult and politically loaded task of launching UNCTAD as a permanent entity. He felt, however, that while well on its way, UNESOB still required for some more time the continuity of its present Director in order to consolidate its position. The compromise that was reached between those two grands seigneurs was of an elemental simplicity. I would be asked whether I was ready to carry for a full year, up to the middle of 1966, simultaneously the two assignments of Director of UNESOB and of Secretary of the Trade and Development Board of UNCTAD.

While the question was coming up prematurely from the point of view of my work in UNESOB, and the prospect of a one year long split assignment in different locations was rather daunting, the assumption was that the UNCTAD Secretariat would be located in Geneva and the idea of being able to be posted in my home city was for family reasons very attractive to both Marg and myself. School attendance had been up to then for our children rather jolting at the whims of their father's career. Our eldest son Daniel placed in boarding school near Geneva had regularly visited us in Beirut during extended vacation periods, but we cherished the prospect of having him permanently closer to us. We visualized with pleasure the possibility that both he and his younger brother and sister would wind up their secondary education in the public school system in Geneva. There thus was every reason for me to take up the rather odd proposal that both de Seynes and Prebisch clearly wished me to accept.

If I was to be away from Beirut a good part of the time in the coming year, there was no reason for the family to delay its move. Marg and the children settled in Geneva in the Summer of 1965. On my part, I chose as accommodation in Beirut the Ecole hôtelière in Dekouané, a suburb at the foot of the mountain. I kept there my base between trips out of Lebanon either for UNESOB or for my new job with UNCTAD. I definitively left UNESOB at the end of June 1966 and rejoined my family in Geneva on a permanent basis. I visited that Office only once later in an official capacity. On return from the UNCTAD II Conference in New Dehli, I stopped in Beirut in March 1968 and gave to the staff of UNESOB a detailed briefing on the results of the Conference and on the state of the world in the field of international trade.

### **35. Senior Official from "the outside" in a regional office**

I had finally left an assignment in which for the second time, I had been cast in a senior position in a region which was not my own. Much later, I was asked in a UNIHP interview (see Foreword, third paragraph) what it had meant for me to be a non-regional person in a regional setting, in terms of acceptance and ability to carry out the work I was entrusted with. My response underlined that there had been in that respect a marked difference in my experience between CEPAL and UNESOB. In Latin America, my perception had been that of the prevalence of a strong "regionalistic" feeling. The provincialism of the Secretariat was very real. Few of its

members had ever worked for the United Nations in another context than CEPAL. Latin America was for many of them their universe, and a broader horizon opening to the world at large was very missing. In point of fact, very few people from outside the region had ever held senior posts in CEPAL. I had been at my time the only non-Latino heading a Division. Upon starting to work in Santiago, I had become soon very conscious of this inward-looking climate, I had first assumed that I was probably tolerated because I was in charge of a Division that was not really central to the preoccupations of the Commission. With the passing of time, bonds of professional respect and personal friendship developed which made me feel completely accepted. In fairness, I can say that it was never pointed out to me that I was "not one of them", never was I hampered in my work because I was a non-Latino. All the same I was at all times very conscious of having to try to be as much as possible like one of them, in particular by speaking Spanish in all circumstances.

Prebisch, incidentally, who had received me warmly and put me at ease upon my arrival, was very aware of the provincialism of the CEPAL Secretariat and deplored it openly. I heard him once scornfully referring to the problem as "the Africanization of CEPAL", after Gardiner had been instructed by his Governments to get rid of all the non-African staff from the Secretariat of the Economic Commission for Africa. He was soon involved in world-wide development politics, however, and nothing changed in that regard. At some point, much later, my name was tossed around by Prebisch and de Seynes in respect of the position of Deputy Executive Secretary of CEPAL. The idea provoked very strong feelings on the part of the Latino community in the Secretariat, which

felt it inconceivable that this job be filled by someone from outside the Latin-American region. So the idea was dropped.

The climate in UNESOB was very different. Comparison has naturally serious limits, in view of the difference in status, size and environment of the two entities with which I was associated. This point having been made, the fact is that I never felt in Beirut the sense of provincialism that had prevailed in Santiago. The team which had assembled to constitute the UNESOB outpost of the United Nations Secretariat was in great majority Arab. Somehow, again maybe because UNESOB was much smaller, I had much more a feeling of acceptance in Beirut among Arabs than I had had in Latin America among Latinos. I do not think that anybody, at the time I was there, really felt that my job should be going to an Arab. My successor there was Jean-Pierre Martin, who was also not an Arab.

I have every reason to assume, however, that this climate changed once the Beirut Office had become the Secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA). As a matter of fact, some Arab diplomats uninterested in the historical background of the Commission, later looked very critically upon UNESOB as having been an entity which had attempted to develop working relationships with Israel, a move which could only have taken place at the initiative of a non-Arab Director. I was involved in the Turin workshops for senior field officials in 1993 when ESCWA celebrated its Twentieth Anniversary. I learned there that the suggestion had been informally aired that UNESOB as the forerunner of ESCWA should have its place in the celebration and that as its

first Director, I might be invited to the festivities. Nothing came of from this idea. Institutional memory is in United Nations circles in short supply, and my faded image would probably be today in ESCWA that of an unworthy compromiser on the question of Palestine.

## **VII. In and out of Geneva**

### **36. The years of the North-South dialogue**

It would not be possible to fully reflect with words the intensity of the professional experience I lived through the years of the North-South dialogue. The diplomacy of confrontation, the dream of commodity power, the endless negotiations, the successful counter-offensive of the West, all offered moments of drama and high expectation and moments of deep frustration, but never moments of dullness, indifference or boredom. My assignment with UNCTAD lasted from mid-1965 half-time and mid-1966 full time until the end of 1980. It was suspended three times, first for an emergency mission to Peru in 1970 following a natural catastrophe, second for a temporary assignment in 1973 as acting Director (Programmes) of the UNCTAD-GATT International trade Centre, and third by a transfer to UNEP from the end of 1973 to July 1975 as Director of the Environment Fund. Giving preference to substantive clarity over chronology, I intend to deal hereafter first with the relevant episodes of the whole of my experience in UNCTAD from 1965 to 1980. I shall thereafter deal, then in chronological order with my three escapades out of UNCTAD during that period.

### **37. UNCTAD : The dream, the struggle, the failure**

With the flowing of time, the context of the UNCTAD episode and its sequence of events tend to somewhat fade in the history of the United Nations, However, both because I lived through them and because I had often the opportunity to describe them in diplomatic training sessions after retirement, they remain quite vivid in my mind.

The world Organization was from its beginning greatly aware of the importance of international trade for the harmonious functioning of national societies. It is thus in 1947 already that it convened in Havana a United Nations Conference on Trade and Employment. The meeting resulted in the drafting of a comprehensive document known as the Havana Charter for an International Trade Organization, which however never came into force. Refusal by the United States Senate to ratify it doomed the whole project. Wishing to fill a dangerous vacuum in international trade relations, a number of countries including the major post-war trading nations, negotiated a treaty setting out for the parties basic rules of behaviour. Thus was born the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Reflecting the liberal and free enterprise philosophy of the major signatories, it enshrined as basic for the international economic order the principles of equality, reciprocity and non-discrimination among countries. The GATT was a treaty and not an organization, and the participating countries were not members but contracting parties. It soon acquired, however, a considerable importance as the regulating mechanism of trade relations, and its secretariat located in Geneva became a powerful entity staging rounds of multilateral trade

negotiations that were setting the tune of the international economic order.

It is in the late 1940's, with the concept of a centre and a periphery in the world economy, that the first analytical work was undertaken in Latin America, essentially in CEPAL, questioning the effects of the GATT system on the economies of the economically weaker countries. This was a region where, with twenty sovereign countries, the problem was already present, whereas in Asia and Africa, it is only with the movement of decolonization and independence that the principle of equality between trading nations would be later seriously challenged. At the time of the Havana conference, Latin America, however, was still very much under the influence of the United States in both economic and political terms. I remember Galo Plaza telling me, during our long waiting hours at Kamina Base in the Congo in 1960, of his participation as delegate for Ecuador in the 1945 San Francisco Conference which negotiated the United Nations Charter. Every morning, a representative of the Latin American Group attended a briefing session chaired by a senior American delegate, in which the Group received its instructions for the daily business of the Conference ! The pioneering work of CEPAL did not make it popular in the Western world. Its first approach to the problem was to put emphasis on import substitution through industrialization in order to alleviate the pressure of free trade on the economy. The analysis was soon broadened to involve other partners and other dimensions, and by the early 1960's development economics had become a body of action-oriented principles. UNCTAD was created in 1964, under the pressure of the developing countries and in spite of very much reluctance on the part of the Western countries

which would have preferred to pursue the matter in GATT. The unequivocal mandate of UNCTAD was reflected in the very name of the institution. It was to study the question of the relationship between trade and development, and to work out solutions for the problems encountered in this regard by developing countries. It was thus to be the first battlefield in which the viability of the principles of development economics was to be tested.

In broadest terms, the objective pursued by developing countries in UNCTAD was the remodelling of the international economic order on the basis of the acknowledgement that formal equality is not doing justice to the principle of equality among nations. It postulated that equality among unequals breeds injustice, and that it is necessary to recast economic relations in order to instil equality at a real level of content, and not apply it in a purely formal way. It fundamentally reflected the old saying of Lacordaire, in the Nineteenth Century, that "Between the rich and the poor, it is freedom that oppresses, and justice that sets free." It was a basic tenet of the approach, that you could not handle relations among people who were placed in an unequal position through the principles of freedom of trade, reciprocity and non-discrimination. It was therefore necessary to develop a new legal system entailing important modifications to the existing international economic order embodied in the GATT. Interference in the freedom of trade through the acceptance of compensatory inequality, non-reciprocity and differential treatment would re-establish an equality of chances among trade partners. In other words, what was aimed at was in a sense a socialization of the international economy. But the word was never used in UNCTAD, because it would have been another red flag of which they were enough

around. One rather talked about regulation. Words aside, the agenda proposed by developing countries in UNCTAD was really the model of an alternative organization of the world economy. One should add that the developing countries did not contend that the GATT system had no merit for the handling of trade among substantially equal developed countries. New rules of the game were necessary, however, for trade with developing countries. Hence the concept of the duality of norms for the ordering of the world economy.

United in the Group of 77, the developing countries, with the support on most issues of the Socialist countries and of China, engaged in a systematic attempt at changing the rules presiding over international economic relations. The Western countries tried at first to negate to UNCTAD any mandate to negotiate, claiming for recognition of a division of work according to which "UNCTAD is deliberative, GATT is normative". That position was undermined, however, by the fact that ECOSOC had divested itself of all its functions in relation to commodity agreements and transferred them to UNCTAD soon after the latter was created. After protracted discussions in OECD, the West conceded that UNCTAD was acceptable as a forum for negotiations. The proposals of the developing countries covered a vast array of subjects. They called for the strengthening of the regulation of commodity trade (a subject to which we shall return), reaffirmed the sovereignty of States over their natural resources, fought for the adoption of a Charter on economic rights and duties of States and of Codes of conduct on the transfer of technology, on restrictive business practices and on maritime transport. Their demands were later summed up in a programme of action for the establishment of a New International Economic Order, and finally the launching

of a North-South dialogue on all those issues. UNCTAD remained throughout the period the basic battlefield of this movement. The sessions of its Conference at Geneva (1964), New Delhi (1968), Santiago de Chile (1972), Nairobi (1976) and Manila (1979), have been landmarks in this respect. The movement, however, soon acquired a political dimension which made the General Assembly itself take the lead in those negotiations. This shift was facilitated, incidentally, by the fact that UNCTAD had been created as a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly and not as a specialized agency as desired at the time by the developing countries. Western countries opposed both in UNCTAD and in the General Assembly most of the latter's proposals. Some were approved by majority vote whereas others were the object of unending negotiations. A split often developed in the West between hardliners led by the United States and more accommodating so-called like-minded countries.

How can one explain first the birth, and then the persistence for some time, of the illusion that such an assault on the existing international order could be in any way successful ? With hindsight, the whole approach has been cast as a pipe dream, in the West often scornfully. It is useful, in order to understand this aberration, to reflect on the political and psychological effect of the unity achieved in the early 1960's among the developing countries. Hardly could a group of countries be more diversified than the ones which composed the assemblage of developing countries, from emerging, through oil-rich, to least developed countries. There was thus no question of them being all in a similar position in terms of their development needs. But they all shared a strong conviction and a common objective for action : the rules of the international economic

order were unfair to them and they must be changed. Those rules had been drafted and adopted collectively, and they could only be changed by collective action. The motivation was thus shared and it nurtured the vision of the strength of numerical power. And the record shows as a fact that this solidarity was lasting and steadfast and outlived serious crises during the years of confrontation with the West. The discipline thus displayed by the developing countries had crystallized in the Group of 77 and introduced in United Nations politics the practice of collective negotiations by groups of countries, much to the dismay of both actors and observers from the Western world.

In terms of the real power that can be brought to weigh on the negotiations, the developing countries were in a precarious position. They held in hand only one major card, that is their position as commodity producers. Commodity power was high in their rhetoric from the beginning, but it is after the first oil shock of 1973 that the concept gained all its significance. It postulated that their control of a sufficient portion of the international trade in commodities would allow the developing countries to extract from the West a change in the basic parameters of the international economy. This vision haunted for a few years the scene of the North-South negotiations. UNCTAD adopted in 1976 an exceedingly ambitious Integrated Programme for Commodities. It provided for the negotiation of agreements for the regulation of the trade in eighteen commodities, of which ten were susceptible of stocking. It also created a Common Fund for Commodities aiming to ensure the financing of buffer stocks as basic instruments of commodity agreements. A number of conferences were convened to launch the Programme, which

however never really took off. Highly concerned with the question of energy, the Western countries accepted for some time to pursue global negotiations with the developing countries if they included energy among the subjects to be tackled. This led to the convening of the Conference on International Economic Co-operation (CIEC) which was held in Paris from 1975 to 1977. In the eyes of the West, this venture aimed to take the North-South Dialogue out of the United Nations rabble and to pursue it among a limited number of "responsible" countries. Two years of fruitless debates in CIEC demonstrated that the failure of progress on bridging the gap between developed and developing countries was essentially substantive, a problem of political will, and was not due to the institutional setting of the negotiations nor to the choice of negotiators. In UNCTAD, meanwhile, it soon became clear that by and large, the discipline manifested in the handling of oil trade by OPEC Members could not be expected from producing countries in respect of other commodities. Copper, which was high on the list of the Integrated Programme, was a telling illustration. No agreement on copper could be conceived without the participation of the two major producers that were Chile and Zaire. But neither Government was prepared to seriously consider entering into an agreement that interfered with the privileges of the transnational corporations that exploited the mines in the country. The developed countries had been reticent from the beginning about the Integrated Programme. Their resistance rapidly stiffened in parallel with the difficulties encountered among producer developing countries in implementing the Programme, which ended up running out of breath.

The Western countries, which had never been seriously

threatened by the challenge posed by developing countries to the GATT philosophy, had by then started a powerful counter-offensive. It consisted in putting the emphasis in international economic co-operation on the internal development needs of the developing countries. Meeting the basic needs of the population and fighting extreme poverty were given prominence in the discourse about international co-operation for development, deliberately overshadowing concerns about the external factors influencing the development process, Numerical power and commodity power had failed to put their mark on the scene, and the voice of those who held raw economic and financial power finally carried the day. A last-ditch attempt was made by the developing countries in the Summer of 1980 to save their initiative. At their request, a special session of the General Assembly was convened specifically to once more consider the launching of global negotiations. The unfolding of that session has remained a textbook case in the history of multilateral economic negotiations. The failure of the meeting to achieve any positive result sealed the fate of the developing countries project, and no further initiative was ever taken to revive it.

The way was thus open for the groundswell by which the West took back control of the United Nations. In the following years, UNCTAD was trimmed from any negotiating functions and its work programme has been progressively de-emphasizing the international dimension of development and largely re-oriented toward the national side of the development process. It still deals, for instance, with the question of services, but its mandate has been limited to the building up of services at the national level. Negotiations on services have been reserved for the GATT, later the World Trade Organization. This has been a

thorough shift and UNCTAD has today only a shadow of a mandate in relation to the original purpose for which it had been created, in particular through the publication of an annual trade and development report.

### **38. The UNCTAD failure : A partisan assessment**

Success brings praise, failure brings scorn and content. The failed attempt of the developing countries in the 1960's and 1970's to reshape the rules of the international economic relations has been the object of very sharp criticism in the West, and also at times in developing countries themselves. The most serious reproach aired has been pointing to the lack of realism, the illusion entirely disconnected from the reality, that has been displayed by the protagonists of a new international economic order. Their model had just been a non-starter devoid of any possibility of implementation. It has also been often brand marked as a disguise to advance a basically political agenda pursuing collectivist interests, and the ghosts of the cold war have been haunting in many quarters the derogatory criticisms unleashed against the programme of the Group of 77. In addition to the negative comments concerning the substance of that programme, the methods of work of UNCTAD have also been assailed as unproductive and wasteful. The practice of collective negotiations by groups of countries, in particular, has been blamed as a fruitless approach to the search for political advantage. Criticism of this practice has been most of the time ferocious, scornful or sarcastic. It has also been the occasion of lyrical statements. Thus Swiss Ambassador Blanckart, who chaired the Trade and

Development Board in the early 1980's, spoke of "Le rituel polarisant de la négociation par groupes menant au dépérissement du dialogue collectif." With the passing of time, such views have largely prevailed, and even some revisionist voices in UNCTAD itself see themselves as finally doing things right, after so many errors and wrong moves in the past.

There was undoubtedly in UNCTAD's approach a great illusion. There was at some point a feeling that the negotiating power generated politically by developing countries working together, backed up by commodity power, might amount to a force that could transcend the economic situation and have an influence on the outcome of the confrontation. And, of course, the first oil crisis was in this regard very dramatic, but it was also perniciously deceptive because it gave an illusion which could not be sustained by further developments. This being said, revisionism about UNCTAD's history is for me unacceptable. I would still wish to keep on record that the contribution of UNCTAD has been to offer a remarkable alternative approach to the management of human relations through the adjustment of economic behaviour among countries. As such it has made a very important intellectual contribution to a problem which remains largely unsolved. My basic point is that the model developed in UNCTAD did not fail because it was as such an impossible or an unreasonable proposition. It failed because it ran contrary to important interests of powerful countries which were not prepared to make the concessions necessary to allow for the developing countries to benefit from a fairer treatment in the world economy. I don't accept that there has been a disavowal of the New International Economic Order because of its intrinsic demerits or its inability to achieve its goals. It has been

discarded because it was displacing too many interests which nobody in place was prepared to sacrifice.

I can only note the fact that things are getting worse in the world. They are not getting worse in terms of actual levels of development. There are in this respect many positive indicators. But this is not what it is all about. What it is about is to organize the world as a community, as a place where the disparities between the have's and the have-not's would be reduced to a point where they become tolerable. It is not about eradicating poverty, but it is, as explained by Charles Peguy, about the difference between *la pauvreté* et *la misère*, between poverty and misery. There is a kind of bottom line in society, said Peguy, above which you might still be poor compared to other people, but you have a feeling that you belong to that society, and below that bottom line you are in misery, you feel you are rejected and you are antagonistic to that society. The dream shared by many people is that we might be able one day to organize the world, the famous global village, in such a way that that line will be the bottom for everybody, that everybody will have a sense of belonging to society, of not being rejected. The model of organization of the international community which was proposed in the 1970's was meant to have a direct impact on national societies. This model has been shelved. I do not see, however, that we are moving in the direction of a more humane society, because everybody agrees that in the last thirty years, disparities have seriously increased, the gap between the have's and the have-not's has continued to widen. Therefore, while the powerful governing forces who want to do it their way have now their full chance, the demonstration has still to be made that the present international economic order will succeed in organizing the planet in an acceptable way. The

indicators of the past thirty years are not such that you can happily discard any alternative model and put all your stack on the present approach. This is why I think the UNCTAD years should stay on record. We might need to look at them again at some point, and we might have to eventually revert to some of the approaches which have been then proposed and have been now discarded. Developing countries have also been very severely judged for often choosing confrontation to push their demands, rather than seeking consensus which was the way GATT operated in its negotiations. A failed confrontation always leaves some bitter taste, it is true, but it is also the way in which one might have had to put a point across even if one were not able to carry it. I have been suspicious enough of the call for consensus at all levels and in all circumstances, to wish that confrontation be not discarded as a useful element in the advancement of new and controversial ideas. It was so that the complexity and the sweeping nature of the issues which we were facing in the 1960s and 1970s - the complexity of the UNCTAD agenda - were making it very tempting to take a holistic view of the task ahead. There is the famous word of the delegate of France who, opposing the Charter on Economic Rights and Duties of States, exclaimed in the General Assembly "Messieurs, on ne codifie pas une révolution." He was aware of what was going on. The attempt, which proved to have been illusory, was that of undertaking a major overhaul of the system, a revolution, and one does not carry out a revolution without confrontation. We tried, we failed, but I don't think we were wrong in trying. I am glad of having been part of a secretariat which had, on the whole, a firm conviction of the necessity of a serious overhaul of international economic relations.

Responsibility for the failure has been heavily shared by the developing countries through their utter incapacity to master commodity power in the reality of international economic life. Commodity power, for a while, was really a tangible illusion. After all, it did work with oil. But oil motivated people to lose sight of the big difficulties lying ahead. They felt that they could erode the wall of the Western control of commodity trade. The holistic approach of UNCTAD in the Integrated Programme for Commodities obviously was daring. It was a questionable idea in that it was over-ambitious. It had an extravagant view of what might be the possibility in real life for the developing countries to control the fate of their natural resources. But fundamentally, I think that the idea that you should not leave commodities in the hands of national policies and the international market was a very sound one. I would refuse to say that this was a bad initiative. Something had to be done about commodity trade. Today nothing is being done about it, and one sees that the cost for producing countries is enormous. It is not only the Ivory Coast cocoa growers that are suffering, it is all over the world that the commodities field is in absolute shambles. The present boom in commodity prices is blurring the picture and may give some illusion, but the whims of the market might soon squeeze producers again. So what was wrong about the idea of the IPC was its overly ambitious approach. But here again, what has happened has been that the countervailing interests which have paralyzed it, very often foreign interests, have been in terms of power politics more successful than the positive forces which wanted to promote it. We had there an idea which has been the victim of a power struggle, but which remains potentially valid. In terms of a fair and orderly regulation of commodity trade.

It remains for us to reflect on the fact that in dealing with the external factors of development, UNCTAD obviously did not offer a full approach to development policy. It could be only part of such an approach, the other part being development policy at the national level. A whole apparatus was in place within the United Nations to deal with the problems of development when UNCTAD was created to fill a specific gap, i.e., attention to trade as an important external factor in the development process. We had received a mandate to look at that part of the problem of development, and the other part was not within that mandate. So we were trying to do well the job with which we had been entrusted, and left outside our purview national policies for development. Prebisch, the Secretary General of UNCTAD, was very conscious of this fact. He never failed to remind us that beyond what we were working at, there was for development another basic level of responsibility, which was the national responsibility.

This was for UNCTAD a disconcerting problem. The political visibility acquired by our activities had become a major element of the daily life of the United Nations and seemed to occupy the whole scene of the development debate. I, for one, felt sometimes rather uneasy about this. I remember once, at the height of the best days of UNCTAD, my making in a staff meeting the nasty remark that while Karl Marx had said that religion was the opium of the people, we had to be careful that UNCTAD did not become the opium of the ruling classes in developing countries. Not all my colleagues found it funny. But I had at times the very strong feeling that we were so much emphasizing our approach to the external dimension of development, that it was becoming a sort of an attractive topic for the governments of the developing countries to concentrate

on, and in the process neglect their basic responsibility which was to handle the problem of development at the national level. Our view on national development policies was an easy way out, in a sense, saying that it was important but it was not our responsibility. On the other hand, I can imagine the outcry if UNCTAD, criticized enough as it was in the West, had started at some point in the late 1960's to think that it had to deal with the problem of national policies for development. I certainly was among those who were conscious, however, of the danger of a distortion in the vision of an overall development policy which was inherent in the way in which we were pursuing our mission.

It is fortunate that the name of Prebisch should have appeared in my narrative presenting an appraisal of UNCTAD. I have dealt in the context of my stay in CEPAL with the personality of don Raúl Prebisch, and recounted on that occasion a number of episodes which took place during his tenure as Secretary-General of UNCTAD. He had been from the beginning the central figure in the analysis by CEPAL of the position of the developing countries in the world economy and in the building up of the basic tenets of development economics. It is thus quite logically and naturally that he had been entrusted with the function of directing the team of officials who would constitute the secretariat of UNCTAD. He remained until relinquishing the job in 1968 our maître à penser, displaying as our leader and intellectual beacon all the qualities to which I have already alluded.

As the father of development economics and the head of an entity created to challenge the existing international economic

order, it was to be expected that Prebisch become on the international scene a very controversial figure. Developing countries recognized the important contribution he made to the raising of attention of which they were the object, and they considered him an invaluable defender of their cause. In Western countries, on the other hand, he was often perceived as a trouble maker and inelegant efforts were sometimes made to debase his intellectual credibility. The range of judgements expressed about him has thus been extremely large, with praise and criticism often crossing the partisan lines. In 1965, at the time of the discussions about the choice of a headquarters city for UNCTAD, the Tribune de Genève carried a story across a whole page under the title Prebisch, un Prophète de notre Temps. At the other end of the spectrum, Marg and I attended in 2007 a lunch at which a retiring Swiss ambassador -the lunch was given in his honour - expressed surprise at the veneration of which Prebisch was still the object in Latin America, given that il a tout fait faux. The image of the prophet had some consistency. We evoked it in his presence years later, when the name of the laureates of the Nobel prize in economics was once more announced without Prebisch being mentioned. We were certain that without his having ever said so, he would have enjoyed the honour. I then dared comment that the Nobel prize in economics was for economists, not for prophets. As he was a prophet, he was expected to preach in the desert, not to receive a Nobel prize !

One of the particularly unpleasant aspects of the systematic disparagement of Prebisch has been the truncating of his thinking in order to question the value of his intellectual contribution. His original proposition in the late 1940's about industrialization as a means to reduce dependency on external

trade has been often referred to negatively as the corner stone of his thinking, keeping silent about the very rich subsequent contributions he made to development economics, and this in spite of them being readily traceable through his writings. The image of Prebisch as the frustrated captain of a sunken ship has been the unfortunate and unfair reflection of the bitterness with which the West has resented the assault of the developing countries directed at their control of the world economy. Prebisch's ideas were a serious threat to the vested interests of the liberal capitalist forces that exercise that control. Hence their constant debasing of his intellectual capacity. Everything, however, that has been said above about UNCTAD applies in the first instance to the man who has forged that institution's thinking. It is important to keep Prebisch's intellectual contribution present in our minds, not only because of its intrinsic historical value, but also because it cannot be ruled out that we might have to revert to it in the future.

### **39. Working in UNCTAD**

The preceding sections sufficiently reflect the climate that existed in UNCTAD throughout my stay with its Secretariat. Contrary to most of my senior colleagues, I had not been at UNCTAD I, the founding event, in 1964. I soon caught up with them, however, and had the privilege of being in a strategically central position to participate in the fray. My task as Secretary of the Trade and Development Board necessitated maintaining at all times an overview of all aspects of the work in progress, which would be the object of periodic review and appraisal at sessions of the Board. It also immersed me in the world of meeting procedures, in which I took a great interest as a

lawyer. Later Secretary of several negotiating meetings and of two sessions of the UNCTAD Conference in Nairobi and in Manila, I had ample opportunity to carry the burden of ensuring that proceedings were conducted in an orderly fashion and in accordance with the rules. Presidents or chairmen of meetings were most of the time chosen for political reasons without reference to their ability to conduct meetings, and the burden was sometimes rather heavy.

Rules of procedure in the United Nations are largely comparable to parliamentary rules generally in use in democratic states. One striking difference, however, was sometimes a cause for surprise on the part of national delegates familiar with their country's procedures. Whereas it is customary in national regulations to require that a motion be formally seconded in order to be recognized for consideration, no such rule exists in the United Nations. This is a legal consequence of the principle of sovereignty. In the exercise of that sovereignty, under United Nations law every State Member has by itself the right of initiative. The practice of seconding motions was so frequent, however, that I ended up generally accepting the relevant statement as a simple expression of support, without pointing out that it had no specific legal content. It was only when a delegate objected to a motion being considered because it had not been seconded that an explanation had to be given as to this discrepancy from usual parliamentary procedure. I also soon became aware that in the tense atmosphere which prevailed in UNCTAD, voting was always a delicate moment. Requests for a roll call vote, in particular, had to be handled with particular attention to a strict observance of the rules, and so were the order in which various proposals were put to the vote and requests for separate voting

on parts of a proposal.

Beyond the position of Secretary of the Trade and Development Board, additional responsibilities involved me through the years in the whole spectrum of meetings convened under UNCTAD auspices. I greatly enjoyed the opportunity of witnessing, and giving support to, a great number of negotiations on a variety of subjects, including the drafting of codes of conduct and the heavy schedule of commodity conferences. The schedule of meetings of the UNCTAD agenda was for many years incredibly loaded, and informal negotiating groups and meeting of groups of countries were taking place incessantly. Meetings at night had become usual, and many times did we see the sun rise over the Alps while still involved in our work at the Palais des Nations. The sessions of the UNCTAD Conference held extra muros were other moments of frantic activity in which I was deeply involved. Politics and diplomacy were very much part of the game, and those events were particularly instructive. This has been the boiling pot in which I lived intensely a practical exposure to multilateral negotiations that became the basis for my deep further interest in the subject. Completing this practical experience with extensive theoretical research formed the backbone of the teaching on multilateral economic negotiations I would undertake after retirement. The reader will find in the pages that follow a number of scattered short stories about various aspects of the experience I lived in this most stimulating and rewarding activity.

I would not wish to refer to this professional experience without mentioning the invaluable support I received

throughout my stay from the conference servicing staff of UNCTAD. They were a group of fully devoted officials who at all levels lived up to the highest expectations and represented an indispensable backstopping of our task to provide the infrastructure that was necessary for the agenda at hand to be properly carried out. The team spirit and unfailing good humour which animated them were exceptional and simply superb. The climate in the services of the Palais des Nations with which we had to collaborate was at first somewhat different. The arrival on the scene of the UNCTAD secretariat disturbed what seemed to us to have been a rather cosy and stale routine. We settled in Geneva as a Secretariat with a theretofore unimagined number of senior posts, a hectic schedule of meetings putting unreasonable demands on servicing staff, and a claim to be treated as a world-wide secretariat in terms of scope and staffing. Because of UNCTAD, the United Nations European Office had to become the United Nations Office in Geneva. Habits had to be shaken and procedures reviewed. Somewhat constrained by the weight of international bureaucracy, the adjustment was nevertheless on the whole successfully worked out. Both the conference services and in particular the interpretation services of the Geneva Office responded to our demands in a spirit of full co-operation. In so doing, some of both their senior and junior staff admitted that the liveliness of UNCTAD activities was for them a welcomed change from the routine to which they were accustomed.

Beyond my responsibilities in conference affairs, I was soon after joining UNCTAD entrusted with the External Relations Unit of the Secretariat, a function later embodied in the position of Director of Conference Affairs and External

Relations. As indicated by the name, the unit was in charge of the relations that the UNCTAD Secretariat entertained with outside institutions. This was a rather formal affair. Working contacts on substantive issues were constantly maintained by colleagues in charge of the relevant subject, and the External Relations Unit was called in when the contact was to be of a more general nature. The political visibility, however, acquired by the North - South confrontation which had developed within UNCTAD and spread to the General Assembly made such contacts rather frequent. They were often taking the form of invitations to meetings to present the problématique of the issues at hand. This has been for me the occasion of a number of trips away from Geneva, as for instance to Budapest to attend a meeting of the World Peace Council, or to Vienna and Palma de Majorca to report on the UNCTAD debates at sessions of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. In the IPU, the tradition was fortunately that wives were invited to accompany their husbands and special programmes were devised for them. Those were two very rare occasions on which Marg accompanied me. UNCTAD had decided to assign to external relations a staff member from the USSR, and I developed with two of them successively very good working and personal relations. The Don Quijote leyendo which today adorns my desk at home, Russian made and cast in iron, was a gift from one of them after he had explained to me the cultural importance attached in the Soviet Union to the caballero from la Mancha.

As of 1968, I was also deeply involved in an other activity within the UNCTAD Secretariat, i.e. technical co-operation. It was natural for me to raise the question of the place of technical co-operation in our activities. I had been, after all,

myself a technical co-operation agent in Lebanon twelve years earlier, and very much involved in the management of technical co-operation projects both in CEPAL and in UNESOB. The UNCTAD-GATT International Trade Centre (ITC) was by then fully engaged in the field of trade promotion, in circumstances which will be described later in this narrative in relation to my temporary secondment to that institution. The question was whether there was also room for a programme of technical co-operation to support the work programme of UNCTAD itself.

Few people in our Secretariat had ever focussed their thoughts on that question. Prebisch himself, for a start, had a vision of our task ahead which made him rather indifferent to the involvement of UNCTAD in micro-assistance of a technical nature. We were working toward changing the world, not called to give attention to isolated trade problems. The ITC had just been set up to do that. Hence the message he is reported to have given about me to his successor Manuel Perez-Guerrero at the time of leaving the post of Secretary-General of UNCTAD : "Paul Berthoud wants to head technical co-operation. Let him do it. But use him also for other things". Of my senior colleagues also, very few had ever been involved in technical co-operation in their previous career, and they didn't seem on the whole to be particularly interested in the subject. Perez-Guerrero had on the issue quite a different sensibility. He had been in the early 1950's Secretary of the Technical Assistance Board, and later Resident Representative in several countries.

More generally, in the early years of UNCTAD the question as to whether international trade was a field of activity susceptible

of lending itself to technical co-operation measures was in some people's mind an open one. Observers from the West, in particular, were often sceptical. Problems arising in respect of international trade generally resulted from a conflict of interests between two or more countries. Could technical co-operation be engaged in such a conflictual situation without jeopardizing its integrity ? The question was soon to be answered, in practice, through the development of the UNCTAD programme. By a stroke of luck, this endeavour was facilitated by the support we received from Bradford Morse, the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The motive of Morse's interest was clear. Being an astute politician, he was observing with some concern the evolution of the political scene within the United Nations. The North-South confrontation had transcended UNCTAD and was in the forefront of preoccupations in the General Assembly. The UNDP, however, which was the major operative arm of the United Nations system in the field of development, had a diversified programme encompassing the whole spectrum of issues relating to development policy at the national level, but was absent from the area in which political debate was raging. The UNCTAD/GATT International Trade Centre had approached UNDP for the funding of some of its projects, but its deliberate absence from that debate had neutralized it. Brad Morse was thus highly interested in seeing UNCTAD develop a programme which UNDP would finance, putting his institution on the political map through a positive contribution to the North-South dialogue.

Things moved at a deliberate pace, but steadily, in that direction. UNCTAD formulated projects for support to the developing countries in their preparations for multilateral trade

negotiations. It backstopped through technical assistance its programme of co-operation to stimulate trade among developing countries, a programme which enjoyed in its first phase the leadership of my compatriot Christopher Eckenstein. We reflected in our activities the concept forged by UNCTAD of least-developed countries. We assisted countries in the building up or strengthening of their institutional structure for foreign trade. We had throughout that effort the support of UNDP and of Brad Morse. I had several occasions to review with him personally in New York various aspects of our co-operation, and solid bounds of friendship developed between us. UNCTAD being still fully immersed in its battle for a new international economic order, I commented more than once at the time that when dealing with technical co-operation, I sometimes felt more at home in UNDP than in my own organization. My relations with Brad Morse also entailed, I may say, respect for my professional work, as Brad Morse ended up enticing me to join UNDP and offered me at the end of the 1980's no less than three different specific posts of UNDP Resident Representative. The third offer, Venezuela, I accepted, in circumstances to which I shall revert later.

The development of our technical co-operation programme naturally called for work in the field. My travel schedule was accordingly loaded, as I undertook through the years a fairly large number of programming or monitoring missions, often together with a staff official of UNDP. The position of head of an executing agency of UNDP also opened for me vast new horizons in the world of the United Nations system, adding in most instances still more to my travel. I represented UNCTAD in the Governing Council of UNDP which met alternately in New York and Geneva, and this was particularly exciting at the

time of the Jackson Report and the Consensus negotiations which marked in 1970 a dramatic change in the orientation of United Nations system operational activities. I attended as well yearly several inter-agency meetings, both global and regional, convened under the auspices of UNDP. This experience was to be invaluable for me at the end of my career and in particular for my post-retirement activities.

Such has been in general lines the profile of my activities during my UNCTAD years. I faced them all concurrently, bestowed in later years in administrative parlance with the title of Director of Programme Support Services, i.e. conference affairs, external relations and technical co-operation ensuring the support of the programme. Those were professionally highly rewarding years, which I could not have faced without the constant assistance of competent and devoted staff who shared the same vision of the value of what we were undertaking. It required, I may add with some pride, an ability to trust colleagues and involve them in sharing the burden of the task at hand which is not the virtue generally best at hand in international - or for that matter national - bureaucracies. It also required unfailing love, limitless support and infinite patience on the part of my wife Marg. I have already said in an earlier section of my narrative what I wanted to say about this, but describing this phase of my career compels me to allude to it again.

## **40. The UNCTAD -GATT syndrome**

Joining UNCTAD in early 1965 as Secretary of the Trade and

Development Board, I was immediately faced with the UNCTAD-GATT syndrome which filled the Geneva scene. Here was UNCTAD, the maverick new organization controlled by a majority of countries determined to change the World. And here was also GATT, the architect and depository of the conventional wisdom aiming to keep the World as it was. And though much nonsense was being entertained about it in the Geneva diplomatic community, including spicy stories about the tension existing between the two Heads of those bodies. I had the privilege of accompanying Raul Prebisch to several meetings he had with Eric Wyndham White and I can testify as an eye witness that the two gentlemen behaved at all times with perfect courtesy in an interface in which ideological differences were not allowed to interfere with the becoming tone of their exchanges. A fact that so many observers failed to appreciate was that while both were perceived as equals as Heads of an entity comparable to an agency, they were in reality cast in extremely unequal positions, with considerable differences in their freedom of action. Wyndham White was the fully accepted and self-confident leader of a tightly knit group of countries which all shared full confidence and trust in his way of conducting the affairs of the Contracting Parties. Prebisch, on the other hand, had to be a cautious leader at the helm of a very disparate and split community of countries some of which had even wished that UNCTAD would not come into existence.

A specific instance dramatized for me this enormous difference in the position of the two leaders. A representative to GATT of a major developing country had presented in the Development Committee of GATT a proposal which represented a clear and obvious duplication with the mandate and programme of work of UNCTAD. I accompanied Prebisch as he went to see

Wyndham White to protest against this proposed encroachment by GATT on UNCTAD's activities. Having heard the complaint, Wyndham White after a short pause told Prebisch : "Forget about it. I shall ask him to drop it." I reflected at the time with fascination over the significance of such a remark. In UN CTAD, It would have been simply inconceivable for Prebisch to make such a statement, as no government would have countenanced it. Whereas Wyndham White commanded among the Contracting Parties a support which allowed him to take upon himself such a stand.

## **41. A magic formula that couldn't work**

In the early years of UNCTAD, all bodies except the Conference had limited membership, and jockeying for participation in commissions and committees was an important diplomatic activity sometimes leading to serious deadlock. We had reached such a point in the Committee of Shipping late in 1965 in regard to the composition of a Sub-Committee due to comprise 28 members whereas 32 countries insisted on getting a seat on that body. The Chairman and I as Secretary of the Committee were patiently sitting at the podium waiting for the ongoing consultations to yield results when a delegate approached us. He wished to inform us that negotiations were going very badly, nobody wanted to give in and the mood among the negotiators was becoming ugly. He then in all seriousness told the Chairman that there was only one way in which he could overcome the impasse. He should announce : "The following 28 countries have been designated as members of the Subcommittee", and then read out 32 names ! Ingenuous, but I could hardly suggest to the Chairman that we entertain the

idea. Though completely unfamiliar with United Nations procedures, the latter had by himself reached the same conclusion. We thus had to bear patience until the problem was finally resolved.

## **42. Riding in Fidel Castro's jeep**

Raul Prebisch was asked in June 1967 by major sugar-producing countries to sound out the Cuban Government as to whether it would be prepared to participate in a Conference for the negotiation of a new Sugar Agreement. After being stripped a few years earlier by the USA of its quota for export to that country, Cuba had flooded the World sugar free market with its surplus and the price in that market had reached an historical low. Prebisch agreed to undertake the mission and asked me to accompany him, together with one official each from FAO and the London-based International Sugar Council. I reached Havana in advance for preliminary contacts, and Prebisch's official mission culminated in a meeting and business lunch on 3 July with President Dorticos and Fidel Castro during which Castro gave his positive reply in principle as to Cuba's willingness to participate in a Sugar Conference.

At the end of the lunch, Castro told Prebisch that he wished to show him the Cuban Revolution at work, and asked him and his party to meet him, ready for a two days field trip, the next morning at 7 a.m. in a military establishment . We showed up as agreed and a convoy of open jeeps was organized in the courtyard, with Castro himself taking the wheel of the first vehicle and inviting Prebisch to sit at his side. A bodyguard

took a seat in the back and Castro was asked who should occupy the fourth seat in his jeep. He briefly looked around and said : "Que venga el Suizo que habla español".` This is how I ended up spending a whole very long day travelling with Castro and Prebisch, following at all times their animated conversation. Castro was then fully involved in the profound technological revolution in agriculture through which he hoped to spearhead the Revolution. Most of the day was thus spent in visiting livestock projects and experimental farms and plantations, as well as training institutions which Castro described as the pillar of the new Cuba. We were still on the go after nightfall and we witnessed a large land-clearing operation conducted with projectors : "The Revolution can't wait", Castro commented. A late evening dinner and breakfast the next morning at a government guest house rounded up the visit and the hospitality personally extended by Fidel Castro to Raúl Prebisch and his party.

### **43. Protocol as a battlefield for power**

The 1968 United Nations Sugar Conference, in which Cuba participated as had been agreed with Prebisch in Havana, opened in Geneva with a major crisis which was highly instructive of the working of multilateral diplomacy. At the outset of the Conference, the spokesman for the European Community made a statement to the effect that international trade being now a responsibility delegated to the Community by its Member States, the latter would have to be seated together in the conference room in order to be able to participate in the work of the Conference. The Soviet Union, which at that time was very reserved in its attitude toward

Brussels, strongly objected to the request, arguing that the rules of procedure of the United Nations were crystal clear to the effect that in Geneva, countries were to be seated in French alphabetical order. There was no reason whatsoever to depart from the rule inasmuch as the countries of the Community were here participating as individual Members of the United Nations in which capacity they would be exercising their right to vote in the Conference.

This seems difficult to believe, but the Conference was paralysed for a full two days, with representatives from the capitals of dozens of countries waiting in the wings, by the question as to how European Community delegates would be seated. Intense negotiations were conducted with all parties concerned during which it became clear that the Community considered its position as not negotiable, putting at stake the very fate of the Sugar Conference. The matter did in substance transcend a point of protocol as well as a question of observance of the rules of procedure. Brussels' position represented in fact an open challenge to the law of the United Nations and an attempt at making the law of the European Community take precedence over the former. The question of the relation between those two legal orders was to haunt us for some time. Then already, however, realism commanded that the specific dynamism of the Community be recognized as a novel dimension of economic diplomacy. The Soviet Union and its allies finally reluctantly abandoned their objection and the deliberations of the Sugar Conference could start with the countries of the Community seated together.

#### **44. A UNITAR quest for a research programme**

In 1971 UNITAR organized a brain storming with the Heads of Agencies of the United Nations System in order to elicit ideas for the formulation of its programme of research. The invitation was sent to Executive Heads ad personam, and it was to be an affair of the top bosses among themselves. Manuel Perez-Guerrero missed the point and believing that it was an inter-agency consultation, asked me to represent UNCTAD. Being the only rank and file official sitting by mistake in this group of Executive Heads, I sat meekly and kept silent for a long time. I did finally dare, however, to mention an idea which had been haunting me for a long time. Wasn't it possibly so that many staff members of the System had a low morale because they worked without having a clear understanding of the real nature of the United Nations and, being overly idealistic, expected much too much from it ? Wouldn't it possibly be an interesting research project to analyse the causes of this low staff morale and ascertain whether a better comprehension of the nature and working of the System might assist them in taking a more positive view of their job ? Wilfred Jenks, the towering Director-General of ILO, immediately took the floor and in his distinctive British English said : "Research staff morale ? But surely, staff morale is a function of leadership. Does Mr. Berthoud suggest that we research leadership ?" I could have crept under the table and naturally kept silent for the rest of the day. The question kept haunting me, however, and it was in an attempt to work on it that I presented twenty years later the United Nations System to the Field Coordination Workshops organized in Turin under the aegis of UNDP.

## **45. China's first participation in United Nations affairs**

It is during the 1971 General Assembly that the People's Republic of China was received into the United Nations. The UNCTAD III Conference was to take place in Santiago de Chile in April 1972, and there was considerable expectation in the UNCTAD secretariat when we heard that Beijing would be sending a delegation to Santiago, its first participation in a United Nations event. After arrival, the Chinese delegation was informed of the working methods of UNCTAD, and in particular of the system of negotiations through geo-political groups which had emerged from UNCTAD and was by then fairly broadly in use on the economic side of the United Nations. There was in this structure an Asian Group within the Group of 77 developing countries, the delegation was told, and China might consider joining that Group.

After consulting its capital, the delegation presented China's position. It indicated that while a developing country, China was also a socialist country, a fact which put it in a special category and would make it difficult for it to join the Asian Group. On the other hand, China was very keen to fully participate in the negotiations which would take place within UNCTAD. After informal consultations among members of the Bureau of the Conference, it was decided to accept the Chinese position and in the light of China's specific political and potential economic weight, to grant it a separate place in UNCTAD as a negotiating partner. Thus in UNCTAD III, for the first time negotiating groups were set up with four negotiating poles, i.e. the Group of 77 (developing countries), Group B (market economy countries), Group D (socialist

countries), and China. This practice later spread throughout the United Nations and some agencies of the System. For twenty years, any competent chairman of a negotiating body carefully made a difference between addressing the Spokesperson for any of the three Groups and the Representative of China. It is only in the Nineties that China started to formally associate itself with the Group of 77 in negotiations and in the presentation of papers and proposals.

It is interesting to note that this important institutional development was not recorded at the time and cannot be traced in any way in the Official Records of UNCTAD. The whole system of geo-political groups, in point of fact, has always remained informal. As some countries were deprived of access to the group of the region in which they were located, the system was not compatible with the principle of equality and equal treatment among all Member States of the United Nations and it could not have been officialized without violating that principle.

## **46. Controlling political incidents through negotiation**

UNCTAD, in itself a politically controversial body, has been on the other hand rather successful at limiting the damage that may be caused to the image of an international organization by untoward and paralyzing political incidents. Clearly political incidents cannot be totally avoided. If a Representative of a Government has formal instructions to make a certain point, it might be impossible to prevent him to do so. In UNCTAD,

however, we sometimes stroved to control the incident through negotiation and prevent it from paralyzing the proceedings by working out with all parties concerned a scenario for its unfolding. Two situations I had to face as Secretary of the UNCTAD Conference will illustrate the way we went about it.

#### **46a. Opening the UNCTAD IV Conference**

According to the rules of procedure of the UNCTAD Conference, every session has to be opened as a convener by the Head of the delegation of the country which held the presidency at the previous session. In practice, it was accepted that the convener would also make a speech before calling for the election of the President. On the eve of the opening of UNCTAD IV in Nairobi in 1976, we learned that the Cuban Delegation was determined to prevent the Head of the Delegation of Chile, the country which had held the presidency of UNCTAD III, from acting as convener. Their position was that it would be a disgrace for UNCTAD to have a representative of the Pinochet regime act in that capacity - the Chilean Government had jailed the President of UNCTAD III, and the General Assembly had adopted a resolution calling for his release.

The situation was potentially very serious, as to challenge the convener would create a vacuum which would paralyze the proceedings. We thus immediately started to work on the case. In an attempt to strike a deal, we asked the USA Delegation to impress upon the Chileans to give up the delivering of a speech and just act as convener, and the Soviet Delegation to convince

the Cubans to make their protest in the form of a point of order after the election of the President. While the Chileans reluctantly agreed, the Cubans at first reacted angrily. The Pinochet case was a Latin American matter of honour and Cuba would not be bullied by anybody into changing its stand. I personally undertook to pursue the negotiation with the Cuban Delegation and it was on the floor of the Conference room, ten minutes after the stated time for the opening, that the Head of their Delegation finally conceded that he would allow for the President to be elected and raise his point immediately thereafter. Indeed, right after the Minister of Trade of Kenya was elected President of the Conference, hell broke loose in the form of an avalanche of points of order - Cuba was not alone in protesting the fact that it had been Chile that had acted as convener. The damage had been controlled however. No vacuum of authority had been allowed to take place. The President entertained the points of order one after the other and there was no paralysis of the proceedings.

#### **46b. Ensuring the right to speak of the Kampuchea Delegation**

UNCTAD V opened in Manila in May 1979 soon after the Khmer Rouge Government of Kampuchea had been toppled by the Vietnamese-backed forces of Hun Sen. The former regime still held the seat of the country in the United Nations and it sent a Delegation to Manila for the Conference. Already before the start of the proceedings, the Delegation of Vietnam and the Spokesman for the Socialist Countries indicated that they would not tolerate the presence at the Conference of Delegates from the now ousted previous Government. We argued with

them that the matter of the representation of Kampuchea was not one for UNCTAD to decide, but for the General Assembly in New York, and the protesting Delegations finally conceded that they would leave the matter lie as long as the Delegation of Kampuchea remained silent at all levels of the Conference. As a courtesy, that Delegation was informed of the situation.

We had reached without problem the third week of the Conference when Kampuchea unexpectedly registered to speak in the general debate which was by then quite advanced. We immediately contacted the Vietnamese and the Spokesman for the Socialist Countries and impressed upon them the necessity to maintain the dignity of the proceedings by avoiding any unbecoming interference in the general debate. We finally agreed on a precise scenario to be followed. The President would give the floor to the Representative of Kampuchea, whereupon the Representative of Vietnam and the Representative of Bulgaria as Spokesman for his Group would raise points of order and vigorously protest against the presence of the Kampuchea Delegation. After those statements, the Delegations of Vietnam and all Socialist Countries would rise from their seats and leave the Conference hall, whereupon the President would reiterate his invitation to the Representative of Kampuchea to take the floor.

We had it almost fixed, but not entirely. One thing we had forgotten to mention - and I was personally to bear the blame for it - was that while speeches were delivered from the rostrum, points of order were to be raised from the floor. The Representative of Bulgaria did not know that, he walked to the rostrum to raise his point of order and collided at the bottom of

the rostrum stairs with the Representative of Kampuchea arriving to deliver her speech. My trusted legal adviser who was watching with an eagle's eye the unfolding of the scenario jumped to grab the Representative of Kampuchea and ushered her into the Office of the President at the back of the podium where he entertained her while the protest statements were made, and the incident could finally take place as had been planned.

## **47. The United Nations conglomerate**

During my years in UNCTAD, I had rather often the occasion to sit with the Heads of Agencies in the UNCTAD seat in ACC, the Administrative Committee on Coordination, and as long as it existed in IACB, the Inter-Agency Consultative Board, ACC's shadow mechanism to deal with operational activities. I was sent there to represent him by Raul Prebisch because he could only rarely quite find the patience to participate in what he considered and described as a pure ritual. I more than once reminded him that the sociologists had long ago found that ritual was what was keeping primitive societies together, but the argument did not move him. Manuel Perez Guerrero's motivation to play hooky was different : he had been so much involved in inter-agency affairs in his years with the Technical Assistance Board and UNDP that he felt he should now concentrate on the substance of the UNCTAD mandate.

In the midst of much ritual indeed, one incident struck me deeply in one of those sessions in which I was sitting for UNCTAD. I don't even remember the exact year it happened

nor the subject that was discussed, but I can still today hear the Director General of WHO, Dr. Candau, telling U Thant, who as *primus inter pares* was in the Chair : "My Governments, Mr. Secretary-General, would never accept that." I have often reflected upon the significance of these words for a full understanding of the United Nations System. For Dr. Candau, "his Governments" clearly were the international community of the Ministers of Health, the community which had elected him, to whom he was responsible for his actions and which might or might not re-elect him upon the termination of his mandate. Everybody knew that comparable international communities of Ministers were controlling the affairs of other agencies, and the pluralistic nature of the System was thus clearly if crudely put in evidence.

This was obvious enough, but a full grasp of the System's reality needs a deeper understanding, i.e., that of the working of forces at the country level. Health, Agriculture, Education are in most countries almost invariably large Ministries. They have a clear constituency, they are large employers, their appropriations weigh heavily in the State budgets and they commensurately occupy an important place in the national public policy spectrum. Their specific political weight on the national scene is invariably considerably greater than that of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which has no clear constituency except perhaps in a diffuse way the country as a whole. It is, however, most often the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which handles the affairs of the General Assembly where the need for closer cooperation among agencies and even at times the desire to bring the System under a single leadership are most strongly felt and expressed. How many times have I heard expressed the reticence of our colleagues in the Agencies : "We do not trust coordination by the General

Assembly, because we do not trust coordination by Ministries of Foreign Affairs"! It is interesting to note that in all the movement about United Nations reform that has been agitating the Nineties, the issue of restructuring the System as a whole has not been seriously discussed in any quarter outside academic circles.

## **48. Facing a natural disaster**

The circumstances of my first assignment outside UNCTAD since I had joined it in 1965 were rather dramatic. On 31 May 1970, Peru was struck with one of the worst natural disasters of its history. An earthquake of great intensity destabilized in the area of the Callejon de Huaylas a glacier provoking an avalanche which completely obliterated the town of Yungay and its approximately 20,000 inhabitants. Devastation and heavy loss of human lives was reported from a vast area North of Lima from the coast to the heart of the Andes. Raul Prebisch, who had by then relinquished the post of Secretary-General of UNCTAD, was designated by Secretary-General U Thant as his Personal Representative in Peru, and he asked his successor Manuel Perez Guerrero whether I could be detached from UNCTAD for a short period to assist him in this task. Perez Guerrero readily agreed. On my part, I found the timing unfortunate, because as Director for Technical Cooperation, I was then sitting as observer in the UNDP Governing Council as it was negotiating the famous Consensus of 1970, and the show was truly exciting. But sense of duty prevailed in view of the amplitude of the catastrophe and I was without delay on my way to Lima through New York.

I spent two -and -a -half months in Peru which allowed me to make some interesting observations about United Nations involvement in response to a natural disaster. During that time Prebisch paid three visits of up to ten days each to Peru and entrusted me with ensuring between those visits the visibility of his position. It was clear to us - and Prebisch later reported to ECOSOC - that at the time, the United Nations System was not on the whole well equipped for assisting countries in the kind of operations that are called for in the first emergency phase following a natural disaster of the kind that struck Peru. Bilateral emergency assistance had been extended massively and at high speed by a number of countries. The useful contribution of the United Nations System came at that stage essentially from UNICEF and WHO/PAHO and to a small extent from WFP, but it remained modest when compared with the single effort made by some countries. In the rehabilitation and reconstruction phase, on the other hand, the role of the United Nations System was to be central and that phase and that role started at an early stage concomitant with emergency assistance. This included in particular assistance for the preparation of requests for submission to international credit institutions and bilateral sources, as well as for the adjustment of the national development plan.

This assignment also gave me the opportunity to witness first hand the working of a situation in which a Personal or Special Representative of the Secretary-General had been appointed in a country which was a recipient of UNDP assistance. Having been in previous years fairly close to UNDP through my technical cooperation responsibilities, I was aware of the existing reticence in some quarters about this institution which was depriving the Resident Representative of his senior most

role as agent of the United Nations System precisely when that role was becoming particularly important. The validity and usefulness of the formula turned out to be in this case evident, a view which I discussed with, and was fully shared by, Anthony Balinski, the then Resident Representative in Peru. Because of the prestige that his person was bringing to the function, Raul Prebisch was received with eagerness at the highest levels of government. I even had the privilege of accompanying him at a business dinner given by COAP (Comité de Oficiales Asesores del Presidente), the highly secretive informal group of the top echelon of the Armed Forces which was then rumoured to be the brains trust and mentor of the Government. Prebisch was thus able in a few days to gather information, analyse it with his interlocutors and share it as appropriate with the United Nations System staff in a way which would simply not have been available to anybody else. Conversely, the confidence relationship developed with Balinski also allowed Prebisch to let the Resident Representative carry out without interference his coordination responsibilities at the working level. Admittedly, it worked out well because the constellation of personalities happened to be favourable, which is a reminder of the importance of an appropriate selection of both Secretary-General appointees and UNDP personnel.

## **49. A foray into the practice of trade promotion**

The second time I temporarily left UNCTAD was not to move into a different field of activity. In 1973, Victor Santiapillai, the Director (Programme) of the UNCTAD/GATT International

Trade Centre (ITC), was detached at the request of his Government (Sri Lanka) to assist in the development of a national trade promotion centre. I was then asked, under circumstances to which I shall revert, to move to ITC as Acting Director to fill his post on an interim basis. It is on purpose that I describe this assignment as having taken place outside UNCTAD. The story that follows will fully put in evidence the reason for this distinction.

The history of ITC is very instructive. It looks at first sight like the setting up of another piece of duplication and overlapping, with two major organizations dealing with international trade already in existence and located in Geneva. Its origin and its rationale, however, can be traced in the clearest terms. With the movement in the early 1960's towards the creation within the United Nations of a body specifically devoted to the problem of trade and development, there was restlessness in GATT also. Developing countries, which were moving in the General Assembly to convene UNTAD I, were starting to exercise considerable pressure on the working of the General Agreement. They were already then a majority among the Contracting Parties as many of them had been enticed by the former colonial power to accede to the GATT soon after independence. It was part of the genius of Wyndham White, the first Director-General of GATT, to design a solution to alleviate that pressure. He took the line that he could not really give in to the developing countries by trying to induce a process of changing the rules of the game. The GATT was there. The law was very clear, the interpretative decisions of the General Agreement had been successively and successfully built up as a respectable body of jurisprudence. But he advanced the appealing suggestion that while the rules of the game could not

be changed, something else could be done to help the developing countries to reap greater benefits from international trade. This would consist in strengthening their position in the interface between sellers and buyers in the world markets. A programme of export promotion could be set up to assist them, through technical co-operation, in enhancing their capacity as trading agents and thus stimulate their development by being better able to sell their products.

The proposal was received with enthusiasm by developing countries, and this is how an International Trade Centre was created in GATT entrusted with running a programme of trade promotion. It was meant to be, in a sense, a *fiche de consolation*. It was something given to the developing countries with the message that if they had problems with the rules of the game, they should bring up the matter in UNCTAD. The General Agreement could not be tampered with from within the Secretariat which was in charge of its implementation. ITC was thus born entirely as a GATT institution. After UNCTAD was created, however, export promotion immediately loomed pretty large within its programme on the development of trade in manufactures. After all, to assist developing countries in selling their goods was something which was obviously needed and loudly requested. So here were the two bodies, the two quasi-institutions GATT and UNCTAD, moving in the same direction, i.e., assisting developing countries to be better trading agents on the world market.

This was an activity that did not in itself involve any of the ideologies which were pulling the two bodies apart. GATT and

UNCTAD were two ideologically very different worlds. The GATT was the epitome of free trade, and UNCTAD the passionate advocate of regulation. But export promotion, which was attended to by both bodies, was not ideologically tainted. It was a sort of neutral activity. And despite all the tensions that existed in Geneva because of the ideological divide, the governments in their wisdom realized that here was an activity which should be isolated from the basic struggle that was taking place, and put under a single roof and allowed to develop without interference from either the one or the other of its ideological masters. The existing International Trade Centre would be expanded to absorb the activities already developed or planned in UNCTAD, and the two parent bodies would exercise joint overall guidance and supervision of the Centre. This is how the joint UNCTAD/GATT ITC was born. In other words, its creation had nothing to do with sloppy resources management or with any ambition on the part of somebody to add another piece to the panoply of multilateral mechanisms. It was the net result of a rational vision that there was, in a difficult and politically loaded situation, at least a certain sector of activity which deserved to be sheltered from the pressures of ideology and allowed to develop on its own. ITC was allowed to have a unique autonomous place in an otherwise very complex and ideologically very charged context. This is why I do consider my temporary leadership of the ITC as having taken place outside UNCTAD.

The staff brought together to launch the Centre were highly competent but also very specialized trade promotion experts, and often unable or unwilling to take cognizance of the ideological and political game that was going on. They just wanted to do a good job at assisting traders. Thus, as could be

expected, joint UNCTAD/GATT guidance to the Centre required at the beginning considerable finesse and circumspection. I had been very much involved in the matter as the UNCTAD representative on the mechanism set up for this purpose. It had been a fascinating diplomatic game with much reliance on subtle negotiation. I remember that in some of our first joint meetings, the whole question as to whether ITC could develop a program of export incentives had raised searching questions with our GATT colleagues. Incentives, of course, enter into the catalogue of the undesired interferences with the freedom of trade ! UNCTAD on its side was much more relaxed about the initiatives of ITC, which predictably tended to expand without too much attention being paid to ideological or political subtleties.

There was clearly in the first years some concern and reticence on the part of GATT about the dynamics of the work of ITC. It seems equally clear that GATT through time somewhat relaxed its position on the matter. My feeling is that Olivier Long, the successor of Wyndham White as Director-General of GATT, played in this respect a fairly major role. There was on his part a kind of detachment. I think Olivier Long was fairly strongly of the view that the business of GATT was to manage the rules of the game. His mandate was to concentrate its attention on the legal infrastructure for international trade. I wouldn't say that he had no interest in the Centre, but he probably felt that it was a burden which was not very central to what should be GATT's preoccupations.

This attitude affected me personally. When Victor Santiapillai was called back by his Government, it was Olivier Long, the

head of GATT, who suggested to Perez-Guerrero, who had succeeded Prebisch as the head of UNCTAD, that I be appointed Acting Director of ITC to replace Santiapillai during his secondment. I have retrospectively thought fondly of that move as a sort of reconnaissance of the impartiality of my behaviour since I had entered the Geneva scene, and it is one of the moments about which I am proud in terms of the way I managed my career. I was after all a man from UNCTAD, known to have worked for years with Prebisch in CEPAL. I had been close to him in his cabinet and Secretary of the Trade and Development Board, and never distanced myself from the mandate of the institution I was working for. GATT had however seen the way I had behaved and was prepared to entrust me to take temporarily the leadership of our joint institution. Realistically, I think one should see in Long's proposal some relaxation on the part of GATT about the activities of ITC, though GATT people would probably deny it. But whatever he might have had in the back of his mind, GATT could never have accepted that ITC be abandoned to the whims of UNCTAD. Some of the most influent Contracting Parties, for one, would not have countenanced it. UNCTAD, of course, would have had no problem about seeing ITC moving in a direction that was akin to its mandate.

The working climate and spirit of ITC, when I joined it in 1973, was drastically different from that of UNCTAD, and the contrast was striking. Remote from the tensions that pervaded all activities of its parent bodies, it had been allowed through the years to somehow develop as a wild flower, just sitting there, coddled by everybody. ITC was loved by the developing countries simply because it was an institution that gave them concrete assistance. It was loved by developed countries

because the latter were able to show through ITC that if the rules of the game were hard, they were good guys after all, doing something to assist the developing countries in their plight. And they expressed their satisfaction by generously financing technical co-operation projects designed and executed by ITC.

The slight distance which GATT then took from ITC gradually increased with the fading away of UNCTAD as an ideological threat. It allowed the Centre to move in all kinds of directions. It has now a good programme of work covering the most diverse facets of the field of trade promotion. Were you to look at it with a magnifying glass, you would probably find it encroaching on several of the principles of the GATT. But this is today of no significance, as it is no threat to the existing international economic order.

About my stay in ITC as Acting Director there is not much to say. I received the full support of the staff and was happy to work collectively with a bright team of devoted colleagues. The atmosphere was pleasant enough, in spite of the unavoidable problems of human resources management that normally pop up in any institution. The formal activity of the geographical sections which were managing and monitoring field projects was not very different from the task accomplished in carrying the same functions in UNCTAD. I learned a lot, on the other hand, from the headquarters-based specialists in specific trade promotion activities such as quality control and packaging, and above all about the manifold approaches to market surveys. It was during my interim tenure that ITC started its somewhat nomadic life. We moved from the

barracks behind le Bocage to the Rue de Lausanne where we were housed for some time before taking as premises a floor in the new ILO building, to then find permanent headquarters in the Rue de Montbrillant.

My stay with ITC ended before the move to ILO, and it did so under somewhat bizarre circumstances. Santiapillai's detachment had been agreed for one year's duration, but persistent rumours were floating in Geneva that he would possibly stay with his Government. I was consequently informally asked within ITC whether I would be ready to transfer to the Centre on a permanent basis if the post were to become open due to Santiapillai's resignation. For some unaccountable reason, administrative services were unable or unwilling to have the question of his intentions clarified through correspondence. It was thus suggested that I avail myself of the occasion of a mission to South East Asia to visit Sri Lanka and raise the question personally with Santiapillai. This I did, reaching Colombo just as riots involving Buddhist priests had degenerated and shots were fired in the streets. The Santiapillai's received me most graciously and made it clear during a delicious Ceylonese lunch that they had every intention to return to Geneva at the end of Victor's secondment. I had to conclude that rumours in Geneva to the contrary had been without any foundation.

## **50. Defensive coordination**

One could hardly spend in the economic and social field even a fraction of one's United Nations career without being faced

with the difficult problem of coordination, and I had to cope with it under various circumstances. It is, however, in my involvement with the activities of the UNCTAD/GATT International Trade Centre (ITC) that I had to face with greatest intensity the issue in all its concrete complexity, first as the UNCTAD representative on the joint mechanism set up by the two parent bodies and later as Director for Programmes of the Centre on an interim basis. It is with UNIDO that ITC had at the time its most serious problems of co-ordination. If you moved into a developed country and explored the potential for selling a product manufactured in a developing country by ascertaining which design would be more attractive to the buyer, was that a function of industrial development or a function of international trade ? When we found out that ITC and UNIDO were both about to send a mission to the same country in respect of the same range of products, we recognized that we had a serious problem at hand and that something should be done about it.

It was thus decided that a permanent joint mechanism would be set up at the level of the Secretariats to regularly review the activities of either body which might by their nature encroach upon the mandate of the other. The joint ITC-UNIDO Committee was meeting on a quarterly basis, alternatively in Geneva and Vienna, and functioned for several years. Sam Lourié was the senior UNIDO member of the Committee and I held that position for ITC and its parent bodies. Recognizing that the tracing of a clear line between the mandates of the two organizations was in a grey zone impossible, we developed an approach to the allocation of projects based on the so-called principle of the major thrust. It was the main primary motivation of the proponents of the project that would be

determinant to decide who would be entrusted with its execution. This could only be a rather loose guideline, of course, and we had at times memorably tense meetings. I remember one evening in Vienna, as we were taking leave to return to Geneva after a particularly difficult day, Sam Lourié telling me : "That was a good game. To play chess with you is always fun".

That game, as well as all similar games in the United Nations System, have been and still are what I have come to call "defensive coordination". The exercise consists in adjusting all problems at the edge of one's mandate, with concessions and trade-offs as necessary, with the ultimate aim of being left in peace to carry out that essential part of the mandate which is not being challenged by any other partner. It reflects in a sense a territoriality of the scope of concern of the System, a concern divided into sectors attributed to different agencies. Fairly soon in the life of the United Nations, it became quite clear that such an approach was deficient in the light of the more and more frequently pluri-disciplinary nature of the problems to be addressed. The pluralistic structure of the System represented a major force of inertia, however, the real strength of which had not been tested. It was my keen interest in an attempt at addressing this problem and developing a new approach to co-ordination in the System that made me leave for two years UNCTAD to work in UNEP.

## **VIII. Nairobi**

### **51. Embarking upon an environmental interlude**

I wish to make clear from the outset that contrary to what had happened during my first two escapades from UNCTAD to Peru and to ITC, my accepting to join UNEP was not originally meant to be a temporary secondment. It could have been a decisive turn for the latter part of my career, as I accepted the post of Director of the Environment Fund as a transfer to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) without any thought of returning to UNCTAD. As to why it ended up not to be the case, I shall return later in this narrative.

I was happily working as Acting Director (Programmes) of ITC when UNEP entered into my horizon. Maurice Strong one day in the Summer of 1973 invited me for lunch at the Auberge de Pregny. I had never met Strong before, though I had heard of him through following as much as possible at a distance the preparations for the 1972 Stockholm Environment Conference and then its deliberations. Inter-agency consultations in which I was involved had regularly been the occasion of briefings on the subject. At the margin of those gatherings, one of our colleagues, Robert Muller, was always bringing up in conversations the theme of environment, with dire predictions as to the importance which the subject would acquire in the future and how much it would require United Nations attention. This was a distant world, however, and it was a great surprise

to me when Strong asked me whether I would be interested in joining his team and offered me the job of Director of the Fund which was to be created within UNEP. He obviously had heard of me, but I don't know how and from whom, as he never told me how my name had come to his attention. He knew that I had been involved through my work in legal and administrative matters. As the charmer he could be, he said he saw many reasons for which I could be an asset on his team. An important selling line he presented was that UNEP's Headquarters would be in Geneva, which he thought would be very attractive to me because my kids were studying here. I mention this point because I remember his coming back to Geneva after the decision of the General Assembly to locate UNEP in Nairobi. He had been confident Geneva would be designated and he obviously wondered whether I would still stick to his offer when knowing that I would have to settle in Africa. I reassured him on that score. I had already been moving around a lot, but I was not at a stage where I would have to decide on the course of my career according to geographic location.

The first nucleus of the Secretariat of UNEP had been established in Geneva. When I joined it in the Fall of 1973, it was in the process of sending to Nairobi a forward echelon in order to install in the Kenyan capital the first United Nations agency world-wide secretariat to be located in a developing country. Probably due to the emergence of environment as a major international concern as a result of the Stockholm Conference, my designation did not pass unnoticed. I received a written note of congratulation from André Chavanne, who was at the time President of the Département de l'Instruction publique of the Canton of Geneva. Der Bund of Berne, then the second daily in German-speaking Switzerland, announced the

appointment with a not so recent photograph of mine obviously obtained from the archives of the United Nations Public Information Office. It was, after all, a seemingly important UN job going to a Swiss citizen. The whole atmosphere was so different from the disparaging mood surrounding at the time UNCTAD in Western opinion ! I reached Nairobi in January 1973, to be medically repatriated to Geneva a few days later with a detached retina in the right eye. The damage was diagnosed by an ophthalmologist, a Kenyan of Indian origin, who was, we learned later, an internationally renowned specialist. Having been informed that I had just arrived from Europe, he told me that repositioning a detached retina was now in Nairobi a common operation, but he thought that I might prefer to be attended to in my medical community. He thus avoided me the embarrassment of having to raise the question myself, and I have always remembered this generous gesture which could only come from a man secure in his position. Anne and Jean-Jacques Graisse received me and organized my repatriation while Marg, who had been about to join me in Nairobi, organized my reception and hospitalization in Geneva. This was only the first of a series of difficulties related to my eyesight. A number of post-operation laser interventions on my retina, two cataract operations and a vitrectomy in the right eye would later mark out my medical record. Meanwhile, Marg and I finally reached Nairobi together to settle in Kenya before the end of February.

My tenure as Director of UNEP's Fund was essentially characterized by working through the process of trying to overcome the difficulties encountered in attempting to put into place the novel co-ordination strategy which Strong had so aptly visualized as an outcome of the Stockholm Conference. I

shall deal with this matter in the next section of this narrative. The working climate in the Secretariat was very stimulating and pleasant enough. The feeling of being part of an important new venture motivated us to give to our job the best we could. For me, it was a first professional close encounter with scientists - one of my counterparts on the Programme side had been Head of the NASA in the United States - and the challenge of finding common ground in launching UNEP's activities was rewarding, if not always easy to meet. My position involved a considerable amount of travel, primarily to New York and Geneva in respect of administrative and financial matters concerning the launching and functioning of the UNEP Fund, to attend the inter-agency mechanism we set up for co-operation with our United Nations System partners, or to participate in meetings on specific topics. We soon developed particularly close links with UNESCO in connection with its Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme, and with FAO as an agent particularly concerned with environment as a facet of its very mandate, and this brought me occasionally to Paris and Rome. The intensity of travelling was for me such that I remember noting at some point that I had spent in the last six months nine nights in an aeroplane, either between New York and Geneva or between Geneva and Nairobi.

## **52. A novel attempt at co-ordination**

I have to confess that it was not the substance of the field of activity to be entrusted to the new agency, borne out of the Stockholm Conference, that was the determining factor in my moving to UNEP. I had developed a general interest and curiosity about the problématique of environment, but certainly

not to the point of giving it preference in my professional life over the vast array of facets of the field of development to which I had been until then exposed. It is in telling me of his concept of the place which UNEP would take within the United Nations System that Strong sold me the job he was offering me. I have referred in a previous section to my concern about co-ordination and my critical appraisal of the state of affairs reflected in what I called defensive co-ordination. Here came Strong mapping out a very different approach to the problem. Environment, he rightly said, was not a sector of activity of its own for the United Nations. It was a general preoccupation for all sectors of activity, which all had their share of responsibility in contributing to preserving the earth from a looming catastrophe. UNEP would thus have no territory of its own. It would assist other agencies in developing their environmental sensibility by giving them guidance and as appropriate support in that task, and by ensuring through co-ordination coherence in the overall effort of the United Nations System. And Strong underlined that the Environment Fund would have in this regard a major role to play. The challenge of bringing such an innovative approach to work in the System was daunting, I saw it, however, as a golden opportunity to contribute to overcoming a major problem besetting multilateral co-operation, and I accepted with great expectation his offer to join his team.

I think it is fair to say that while the experiment did achieve some measure of success, it also gave opportunity to measure the extent to which the System had difficulty in experimenting with new approaches that would challenge established modes of operating. Agencies, Governments and UNEP itself all contributed to an erosion of a course of action which could

have offered a promising departure from the routine of defensive co-ordination. Soon after my appointment as Director of the Fund, I visited all major Agencies, where I was received at the highest level most courteously but with ambivalent feelings. I was potentially bringing money, but what would be the price to pay in terms of UNEP meddling in the affairs of the agency ? The assertion on the part of an external body that it had by mandate a concern in the totality of the agency's mandate, albeit from the specific angle of an environmental dimension, was in most quarters very difficult to accept. Though participating in the inter-agency mechanisms set up by UNEP and quite happy to see the UNEP Fund occasionally financing some projects in their programme, they never fully accepted that they were in respect of environment part of a network in which overall guidance was exercised by an outside entity.

Governments, which had created UNEP, did not fare better. They soon demanded from the UNEP secretariat an accountability that was hardly different from the way they assessed the achievements of other agencies. During the session of the Governing Council of UNEP in the Spring of 1974, the French Delegate asked me for documentation showing the performance of the Environment Fund for the purpose, she said, of persuading Paris to increase its contribution to the Fund. I made the point to her that the results of UNEP's activities in fulfilment of its mandate should be assessed within the agencies on which UNEP exercised an influence rather than in UNEP itself. Her answer was quite sharp : "Mon cher Monsieur, c'est du folklore." She went on to say that that kind of sophistication would not impress in her country the relevant authorities. It was only by presenting

concrete and visible results directly creditable to the Fund itself that she could make a case for increased resources to be allocated for its activities.

UNEP itself, finally, also contributed to an erosion of its very basically novel position in the System, by succumbing to the temptation of undertaking itself a number of activities which ended lending some substance to the view that environment was after all another territory. The question as to whether the convening of a United Nations Conference on Desertification should be entrusted to FAO or to UNESCO, or to both jointly, would admittedly have been a very difficult one to solve. To skirt the issue by having UNEP itself organize that Conference certainly contributed to the "trivialization" of UNEP in the eyes of its partners in the System as just another agency in charge of another sector of activity. On the whole, the forces of inertia at all levels of the System thus turned out to be still stronger than the spirit of innovation which had sparkled for a while as a result of the Stockholm Conference.

### **53. Shadows of the North - South confrontation**

One of the fascinating things about the United Nations entry into the field of environment - I had noticed it already from the outside - was the way in which developing countries were brought into this venture. The record shows clearly that developing countries had been very sceptical about the whole idea of having a UN conference on the environment. They felt that this was a subject for the rich countries among themselves

to worry about, and it was even specifically suggested that the matter be raised in OECD. It was the genius of Maurice Strong to overcome this dilemma. He is said to have ensured the universality of the Conference by telling developing countries' leaders : "Poverty is your worst pollution". The Conference was thus to be their concern also. And indeed they came to Stockholm. Officials who have worked closely with Strong at the time are categorical about the fact that he never pronounced this famous phrase attributed to him. If he did not utter the words, those clearly reflected his thinking and tactic. And it worked.

But the consequence, quite naturally, was that UNEP started with a very broad agenda. It encompassed not only environment as such, but also human settlements. The concept encompassed by that heading naturally had an important environmental component. It also embraced a much larger array of activities related to the physical infrastructure of human habitat, the planning and management of human settlements, and urbanization and the relationship between town and country. In other words, it was to a large extent a development agenda. As director of the Environment Fund, I was particularly aware of this situation. We were pressed to engage under the heading of human settlements into the financing of activities the clearly environmental nature of which was at best doubtful. But this was what developing countries largely considered as their share in what UNEP was to be doing in the field of environment.

The movement which had been ignited by the vision put forward by Strong - poverty viewed as pollution - found its

epitome in 1974 in the Cocoyoc Declaration, a statement issued by a group of experts convened by UNEP. It was a revolutionary document which was endorsing within the confines of the UNEP programme all the tenets of the New International Economic Order. This took place under circumstances with which I was never quite familiar, but I knew that Branislav Gosovic was very much involved in it. Wassily Leontieff had been in Cocoyoc, and he had been co-signatory of this Declaration which I understand provoked quite a scandal in Washington. From what I know, there was a very strong intervention on the part of the United States, to the effect that this was not at all a direction in which UNEP could go in developing its activities. Western countries in general were not prepared to see UNEP becoming another battlefield for the NIEO.

In point of fact, this broadening of the concept of environment sought by the developing countries did not last very long. In 1977, the Vancouver Conference disassociated human settlements from the concept of environment and created for that field a separate agency called Habitat, the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements. The swiftness of this institutional adjustment came as a surprise to many observers, and I have always been curious about the forces which had been at play in that game. The whole process had in particular one very interesting positive consequence. Up to that time, the United Nations only had had in the field of human settlements a section called "Housing, Building, and Planning" in Julia Henderson's Department of Social Affairs. It had been one of the other sections of the Department when I worked in Social Defence in New York. They were really very much an architects' setting - housing, building, and planning. What came

out of the process of devising human settlements as a facet of environment and then giving it a life of its own was a much broader concept encompassing land management, physical planning, infrastructure and services, finance and public participation.

## **54. Maurice Strong**

I should not leave this chapter of my professional life without saying something about Maurice Strong, to whom I owed the fascination of having lived this experience. He has certainly been a personality that left his mark on the top echelon of the United Nations Secretariat. He was a very attractive person, always bubbling with ideas. I found this aspect of his personality particularly interesting because of the parallels and contrasts it evoked in my mind with Raúl Prebisch. I was fairly close to those two people, even if not at their level. Prebisch had been throughout his career in public service, which is what would also happen to me. This experience leaves one imbued with a *Weltanschauung* that has the undeniable qualities of selflessness and social vision, but also its limitations. What fascinated me most in Strong was the way in which he tried to project into our work what he was seeing as the merits of the private sector and its ability to improve the quality of a United Nations operation.

That has been a striking experience. For instance, I heard Strong saying, in a staff meeting with all his senior staff, "It is a very important matter. It is so important that we might even hire somebody from the outside to look at it." I think he never

realized how devastating such a statement could be for the top staff he had hired to assist him in the team. "The world is the limit. If I have a problem, I will phone the guy who knows the most about it. If he cannot help me, I will ask him who is the guy who next to him knows the most about it." That kind of openness and flexibility was a major strand of the way in which Strong was used to operate. I am not passing judgement as to the merits of the approach. I just note that it is a sharp contrast to the traditional bureaucratic approach to problem solving. And I mean bureaucracy in a positive sense. One important thing which Philippe de Seynes taught me was not to take the word bureaucracy in vain, not to consider it a derogatory word. Strong was really at the other extreme of the spectrum of administrative behaviour, and it was tough on the staff who had never before been exposed to that school of thought. He would not mind, for instance, to let subsist in an administrative structure some uncertainties, some vagueness about who should be doing what. You would go to him and say, "But look, it is not very clear. You really want me to get into a fight with that guy ? Why don't you tell him what he should do and me what I should do" And Strong would reply with a smile "A little fight from time to time is very good to know who is really the stronger." This was another private business approach, which is so completely incongruous in the civil service that it was at times difficult to adjust to it. But it made, of course, for a fascinating experience. Strong is exceedingly bright, very generous. He has been very successful financially in bubbling all the time with new ideas, rather proud of the fact that he has had no formal education beyond the middle level, a self-made man. He was a hyperactive man. In point of fact, he left UNEP at the time one thought he would wish most to stay to see it building up, because of the extraordinary dynamism

and drive he has in himself. Such is the profile I can draw of the man I knew in the 1970's.

Strong has since his UNEP days often been in the news in different contexts in relation with his United Nations' related activities. Of that I have no personal experience whatsoever, and I have nothing to say about it. I never met him again personally other than in a crowd, and only once professionally. In 1996, I was heading a feasibility study on setting up a staff college, and I felt it would be very interesting to have his views about this project. Typically, Strong being very busy gave me a breakfast appointment in a hotel in Toronto. He gave me a warm welcome, and he offered me a number of very pertinent and sound remarks about the project we were studying. In casual conversation after we had closed the business part of our meeting, I mentioned that this being my first trip to Toronto, I was particularly impressed by the daring architecture of modern buildings, and specifically one towering just across the street from the hotel. "Oh yes, answered Strong, eye built it."

## **55. Returning to UNCTAD**

By the middle of 1975, I was still working toward completing my team in the Fund while we had already engaged in a number of projects. The difficulties referred to above in respect of UNEP's inability to live up to the expectations of its novel approach to co-ordination were already casting a shadow over our activities. So was also the crisis provoked by the West's reaction to the Cocoyoc meeting. We were taking the situation in stride, however, and pursuing our efforts toward building up

this new venture of the United Nations system. One disquieting factor concerned me greatly, however. I had the definite impression that Maurice Strong was, if not losing interest in UNEP, certainly taking distance from its daily life and difficulties. A deputy Executive Director had been appointed in the person of Mostapha Tolba, who enjoyed a solid reputation as a scientist concerned with the fate of the environment. Tolba immediately showed a keen interest in all facets of the Secretariat activities. Due to Strong's more and more frequent absences, he soon became the de facto boss of UNEP. In this position, he often felt a personal responsibility to involve himself in detailed aspects of the work of the Secretariat that in good administrative practice are usually entrusted to line staff. A most intelligent and extraordinarily hard working personality, Tolba had been Minister of Higher Education in Egypt, and I assumed that his management style probably reflected the culture of the Egyptian civil service. We immediately developed a positive and pleasant relationship, which endured throughout my stay in Nairobi in spite of some difficult moments. As could be expected, Tolba's dynamism was not to spare the Environment Fund from his activism. and it was not always easy to keep track in operational terms of the outcome of his constant contacts with government representatives.

Thinking back of the early days of our work in Nairobi, incidentally, it is interesting to note that the first two executive heads of UNEP (Tolba was confirmed in that position upon Strong's formal resignation) were both clearly mavericks in terms of United Nations bureaucratic practice. Their management style was very contrasted and had little in common, but both were to a large extent unfamiliar with the

managerial and administrative culture of the United Nations, free-wheeling as heads of a new structure set up to address a new dimension of international co-operation. In addition to the novelty of the subject matter, the whole UNEP experience was for me quite a contrast with the United Nations settings within which I had been operating in New York, the Middle East, Latin America and Geneva.

None of the above, however would have been cause for me to give even a thought of separating from UNEP. It just evokes the context in which, in the Summer of 1975, a virtual bombshell hit me in two strokes. First, the news reached Nairobi that Jean-Pierre Martin, who had succeeded me as Director of Programme Support Services in UNCTAD, had died in a car accident in Geneva. Then, a few days later, I was approached by Gamani Corea, then Secretary-General of UNCTAD, asking me whether I would be prepared to return to Geneva and occupy again the post I had relinquished two years earlier to Martin. The predicament of UNCTAD justifying that approach was that the Fourth Session of its Conference was due in less than a year's time and they were greatly concerned about ensuring a proper unfolding of its preparation. The death of Jean-Pierre Martin was for me a great shock as a personal matter. We had known each other in the fifties as he had been then working in Philippe de Seynes' cabinet, and we soon developed a friendly relationship nurtured by a natural empathy and a common vision of our commitment to serving the United Nations. Links of close friendship further developed between us in 1960 during the Congo operation to which he was assigned as Political Adviser. We worked particularly hand in hand in the affair of the Kamina base and spent considerable time together in Kamina itself. De Seynes obviously

considered us as having been carved from the same wood and decided to send him to Beirut to replace me as Director of UNESOB when I transferred to UNCTAD in 1966. In what was becoming a pattern of succession, he then took over my post when I left UNCTAD for UNEP in 1973. His disappearance and the tragic circumstances of his death affected me greatly. It was the loss of the man who had probably been the closest friend I had ever made in my United Nations life.

The offer of UNCTAD to rejoin their ranks raised for me a problem relating to career prospect. Tolba had just informed me that the post of Director of the Environment Fund had been reclassified to the level of Assistant-Secretary-General (ASG). When I raised with him the question of UNCTAD's approach, he reacted by expressing confidence that I would surely not forego the opportunity of a promotion to the ASG level to return to a position I had already held some years ago. It happened, however, that this dilemma related to a problem about which I had reflected for a very long time. That reflexion went all the way back to a remark that my Directeur de thèse, Professor Maurice Bourquin, had made once in 1945, when I had told him of my keen desire to join the United Nations Secretariat. "Mais Monsieur Berthoud, he said, les grandes carrières internationales sont des carrières nationales." He certainly was right in his appreciation. Of the seven Secretaries-General we have had to this date, six were eminent national personalities. Only one, Kofi Annan, was chosen from inside the United Nations Secretariat staff, and this was under special circumstances. When Washington decided to force out Boutros Boutros Ghali after he had been in office for only one term of five years, the Africans claimed that the successor

should be chosen from Africa to honour the practice that had then developed of having each region holding the post for two terms. That had been the case for U Thant, Waldheim and Perez del Cuellar. The search for a successor to Boutros Ghali was thus an urgent matter, and Annan's candidature was solving a difficult problem. Had there been time for the usual long haul in the competition for the job, it is hardly certain that he would have emerged as the choice. The fact that the Africans got more than their share of tenure by Annan being in turn confirmed in office for two full five years terms, speaks well of his performance and of the general appreciation of his leadership. His successor, however, was again chosen from among eminent national personalities, in the person of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea.

The second echelon of the United Nations Secretariat hierarchy consists of the positions of Under-Secretary-General (USG) and Assistant-Secretary-General (ASG). In very rough terms, those can compare to the positions of Minister and Secretary of State in a Cabinet, whereas the Director grades (D2 and D1) correspond to what the French call *les grands clercs de l'Etat*, those top members of the civil service who, impervious to the vagaries of politics, survive in their job irrespective of the coming and going of ministers and ensure through continuity the proper working of the public service. The situation alluded to by Professor Bourquin largely applies to the category of USG's. Indeed, to my knowledge, very few positions of that rank have ever been filled by insiders. The one very deserving case I know of a colleague having ended his career at that level is Brian Urquhart. It is a fact, on the other hand, that a number of career staff members of the Secretariat sometimes attain the level of ASG's. They are then invariably detached for the

purpose from their regular grade and status as civil servant. They retain in abeyance and can recover their previous rank if they remain in United Nations service upon termination of their assignment as ASG, which is rarely the case.

I had taken the wisdom of my Professor very seriously and kept it very much in mind all along my United Nations experience. Having no significant national career to show, I had long ago shelved the ambition of moving up beyond the grade I now held in the Secretariat hierarchy. I was looking forward to being, any analogy having of course the taste of fantasy, a grand *clerc de l'Etat* in the United Nations bureaucracy - in De Seynes positive meaning of that word. Tolba's enticement to be appointed ASG was thus for me of no great significance. I rapidly, almost abruptly decided to respond positively to Corea's call and accept to return to my UNCTAD job in Geneva. So abruptly, in point of fact, that I tactlessly made my decision before even mentioning it to Marg. She had valiantly overcome the not so easy task of adjusting to life in Nairobi, and even if I could take for granted that she would be happy to return closer to our children, my rudeness in handling the matter was hardly forgivable. Sensing my determination, Tolba took it well and held me no grudge. We hardly ever met since I left Nairobi. Once, though, which I remember well. Ten years later, I was one evening entering the VIP room at Brasilia airport at the end of a mission for UNDP. And there was Tolba sitting with a group of Brazilian officials, waiting to leave after a visit to Brasilia, albeit on another flight. He came to me and gave me a most cordial embrace, then turned to his retinue and introduced me saying "This is the man who walked out on me when I offered him a top job on my staff" !

Why was my decision to return to UNCTAD such an easy one to take ? I have reflected again on this question when trying to record as precisely as possible for this narrative my UNEP experience. It could not have been just one thing, that it be the complexity of our attempt at reinventing co-ordination, the disappointment of Strong disengaging from his leadership role, Tolba's authoritarian management style or an inability on my part to get involved in the substance of the UNEP Programme. It was the accumulation of all those factors that made for the push which facilitated my decision to leave. The pull was no less important in shaping up my mind in that direction. I had just not found to the same degree in UNEP the sense of purpose, the excitement, the conviviality and the human warmth which had characterized my Middle East, my Latin American and my UNCTAD experience. We returned to Geneva at the end of the Summer. Closed the UNEP episode, I resumed my activity in UNCTAD as already described earlier in this narrative. This includes a specific situation that arose in the UNCTAD IV Conference in Nairobi for the preparation of which I had specifically been recalled to Geneva. Then in 1980, a new turn of events was to be unfolding for me.

## **IX. Venezuela**

### **56. Turning to UNDP and Returning to Latin America**

In mid-1980, the leadership of UNCTAD entered into a period of uncertainty with the impending retirement of the Deputy Secretary-General Stein Rossen. True to his character and temperament, Secretary-General Gamani Corea showed no haste in taking a decision on filling the post. I think it is fair to say that it is without any prompting on my part that my name came up as a possible candidate. It is just, I have to suppose, that while directing all the support services of the Secretariat at a time of very heavy involvement of UNCTAD in a vast array of negotiations, I was also showing a keen and active interest in the substance of our programme. I could therefore presumably be seen by some of my colleagues as enjoying an all round grip on the demands of the job which was not matched by other senior staff. Be it as it may, I decided to confirm my interest in filling the post if offered to me. Ironically, this was a position at the level of Assistant-Secretary-General, a grade I had spurned a few years earlier in UNEP but in which I was now interested, albeit not in terms of the grade but because of the position. Though the North-South dialogue was then giving unmistakable signs of weariness, UNCTAD still was a prestigious entity in the United Nations machinery, and a number of outside candidates manifested themselves. Attention soon focussed on the person of Jan Pronk, who had been Minister for Development Co-operation in the Dutch

Government. For a long time that Summer and into the Fall, his name and mine were tossed around as to who would be designated as UNCTAD's number two.

By sheer chance, it is during that period of uncertainty in UNCTAD about Rossen's succession that Bradford Morse approached me with his offer to join UNDP as Resident Representative. I have related in the section above entitled Working in UNCTAD the circumstances under which my work in UNCTAD had brought me fairly close to UNDP, and in particular to its Administrator. And I should admit that in spite of my strong attachment to UNCTAD, Morse's friendly insistence did not leave me indifferent. I had been a technical assistance consultant in Lebanon for a full year. I had served in Latin America, in the Middle East and in UNCTAD, in positions in which I was greatly involved in operational activities for development. And I had fairly early come to the view that the job of Resident Representative in an assistance-receiving country was one that would really round up a United Nations career. You would probably lose for a time the broader outlook on the United Nations as a whole, but gain in a specific situation a much deeper understanding of the complexities of national life and the working of a government. I was on record as having made that point on a number of occasions. Maybe also because I had been in the field in other capacities, a vague feeling of having missed something if I were to leave the United Nations without having had that experience had drowsed in the back of my mind for a long time. Hence the dilemma which Morse's approach posed for me.

I declined, however, the two first postings as UNDP Resident

Representative Morse offered me at the time - subject of course to the Government's approval, which were Bangladesh and Brazil. The first I turned down almost forthwith. I was after all fifty-eight years old and felt both my wife and myself had carried out a sufficient share of field work not to wish to settle for another field assignment in a hardship location like Dacca. I also turned down Brazil, gauged against the then still pending prospect of a favourable decision in UNCTAD. I was in any case only mildly interested in the posting. My uninformed view was that Brazil being such a huge decentralized country, whatever the United Nations could offer would be an insignificant drop in an ocean, and the job may consequently be of only limited scope. I came later to change my vision in that regard. The post was then offered to a senior official of UNIDO, my compatriot and colleague Peider Könz. Hearing him later describe the various challenging facets of his life as UNDP Resident Representative in Brazil, I realized that I had misjudged the potential scope of the United Nations presence in that country.

The decision to designate Jan Pronk as Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD had just fallen when Morse came back to me to offer me the post of Resident Representative in Venezuela. The syndrome described to me thirty-five years earlier by Maurice Bourquin, "Great international careers are national careers", was once more proving true ! I had by that time clarified my mind as to what my position would be in that event. While I would accept the UNCTAD job if offered to me and forego any UNDP prospect, I would, if not designated, leave UNCTAD and accept a job with UNDP. In point of fact, with hindsight Corea's decision to appoint Pronk has been for me salutary. The deadlock toward which UNCTAD was

moving had not yet altered the spirit which animated the Secretariat, and I did not have the crystal bowl that would have made me turn down the UNCTAD job on that ground if it had come my way. But the North-South dialogue and the related UNCTAD strategy later completely unravelled, and I dread thinking of what would have been my fate in an organization which was being progressively deprived of all the attributes which had been its very *raison d'être*. My motivation at the time to leave UNCTAD was however more personal. I must confess that I had been weary of waiting so long for a decision from Corea. I was also stung by the position taken by some supporters of Pronk's candidature, reported as having told Corea that as he had Berthoud anyway, why should he not choose Pronk and so strengthen his staff. I may add that as the matter lingered, Marg had manifested about the situation a mounting indignation which helped me strengthen my resolve. Personal circumstances were offering me the opportunity of having yet another experience in my UN career, to satisfy that old feeling of wishing to round it up with having been at least once a Resident Representative. It was quite late in my career for me to take on a new job. But I was confidently looking forward to it because I felt that with the experience gained from the other assignments I had lived through, I could dare to take that step.

Venezuela as a posting for this job suited me well. It was located in Latin America which was for me a fairly well known region. I was quite familiar with that country's position as a leader in the Group of 77. Perez-Guerrero was there, with whom I had had a close working relationship. Caracas was the headquarters of SELA (Sistema Económico Latinoamericano), which at the time one felt might emerge as a think tank for

Latin America, unlike CEPAL unencumbered by the participation of the USA and other Western powers. Caracas was also the seat of the Andean Development Corporation (CORFO), the financial arm of the Andean Pact. The recently established Venezuelan Oil Facility for Central American countries, the San Jose Facility as it was called, was a notable experiment in South-South co-operation. There was plenty to look forward to in Morse's last proposal. I decided to accept his offer and informed Corea accordingly.

## **57. The complexity of co-ordination**

Moving early in January 1981 to Caracas in my new position as UNDP Resident Representative in Venezuela, I was immediately faced with the difficulties that beset the United Nations system in respect of the co-ordination of its activities at the field level. I should at this stage mention that Bradford Morse, as an astute politician, had been pursuing a specific objective in attempting to convince me to accept a senior position in UNDP. The General Assembly had during its session the preceding year given attention to the problem of the co-ordination of the activities of the United Nations System at the field level. It had decided to create the position of a Resident Coordinator to be posted in all countries receiving assistance from the United Nations System. The question obviously arose of the relationship between that function and that of the UNDP Resident Representative. UNDP had pointed out that exercising that responsibility was precisely one of the attributes of its Resident Representatives, and claimed that those should thus normally be the person designated as Resident Co-ordinator. UNDP's position on the matter had soon

been heavily criticized in some quarters, in particular in the large Agencies of the System, for monopolizing the nascent function of Resident Co-ordinator by welding it to that of Resident Representative. In response, Morse was trying to attract into UNDP a number of senior officials from Agencies of the System, in order to show that he had no intention to keep the new institution as a closed shop. I was on his list for that purpose, a context of which I had been fully aware when considering his offer.

It happened that I was at the beginning of 1981 among the very first officials to have the benefit of the double accreditation which had been designed to regulate the dual position of the new country representatives. This was to consist of two letters addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the country of assignment, one as UNDP Resident Representative signed by the Administrator of UNDP, and one as Resident Co-ordinator for Operational Activities of the United Nations System signed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. It was my bad luck that when transiting through New York for briefing on my way to Venezuela, the Secretary-General had not yet had time to sign my letter of accreditation as Resident Co-ordinator, and I reached Caracas with only Morse's letter in my pocket. After a few days, I felt that I could not any longer delay presenting my credentials and I did so as Resident Representative in a visit to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Predictably enough, Secretary-General Waldheim's letter reached me by pouch barely three days later. Not being prepared to expose the United Nations to ridicule, I decided not to solicit a new meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs but simply handed that second letter to the Director of Protocol of the Ministry.

The UNDP Office continued to exercise under my direction the functions over which my distinguished predecessor Hugo Navajas Mogro had presided for a few years, In point of fact, I had asked him during my briefing in New York to explain to me how my job as Resident Co-ordinator would differ from the one he had carried out as Resident Representative. I had drawn from his explanation the conclusion that the good Resident Representatives had been Resident Co-ordinators for the past twenty years, a formula which I later used more than once in discussions about field co-ordination. I had to revert to this point a few months later, when I was requested by the Director-General for Development and Economic Co-operation (DIEC) in New York to consult the Government, as part of a general enquiry, to ascertain the way in which it wished the Resident Co-ordinator to exercise his functions. Before doing so, I went back to the DIEC Office and asked for instructions as to how the novelty of the institution should be presented to the Government. The answer was that the new formula presented two important new features. Firstly, I had as Resident Co-ordinator an accreditation by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and secondly my responsibilities covered the activities of the United Nations System as a whole.

It was obvious to me that, in my consultations with the Government, I could hardly use either of those points beyond presenting them as elements of clarification of an existing situation. To attribute to them the value of innovations would have potentially cast all my predecessors in an embarrassing position. The Government, I was confident, had clearly perceived them in practice as agents of the System as a whole

without questioning their authority, and I was not prepared to encourage the raising of questions as to whether their past activity had been legitimate or exercised without a proper mandate. As I had suspected, the counterpart entity of UNDP at the working level in the Government was quite unaware of developments in the General Assembly and had to be briefed about them.

It was clear, and comparing notes with colleagues from other countries later corroborated the fact, that the creation of the institution of the Resident Co-ordinator had been the result of intellectual efforts at improving co-ordination made by Governments acting in the General Assembly. It was left for us in the field to give it substance and to devise the way of making good use of this new tool. In this respect, I remember a colleague posted in a Latin American country exuberantly telling me on the occasion of passing through Caracas : "Now I have a stick !" He was utterly wrong, of course, both in form and in spirit. In form, because the General Assembly had once more succeeded in squaring a circle. It had asked the Resident Co-ordinator to assume over-all responsibility for, and co-ordination of, operational activities for development of the United Nations System carried out at the country level. But two paragraphs later in the same Resolution, it had decided that the preceding guidelines did not affect the direct lines of authority and communication between the representatives of organizations of the United Nations System at the country level and their own Executive Heads. Twenty years after the Congo mandate, again il fallait le faire ! The idea of the stick was wrong in spirit too, because given the delicate texture of the constitutional arrangements of the United Nations System, irrespective of General Assembly pronouncements it was

obviously only through the co-operation and goodwill of the partners that coherence and co-ordination could be achieved. This would be some years later the approach to the development of a field culture of co-ordination encouraged by the Turin workshops with which I would have the privilege of being associated.

## **58. Governmental informality**

On the eve of my leaving UNCTAD for Caracas, the Ambassador of Venezuela had kindly hosted a lunch for my wife and me during which he had offered some friendly advice about what I could expect in my new job. One of his points had been to prepare me for the exceptional climate of informality I would find at all levels of the Government. Was I facing an urgent problem, he said, I could just call the Minister concerned and he would probably suggest that I come and see him right away. It was however also part of the informality, he added, that the Minister might have gone when I would reach his office. The remark had struck me as rather funny until one day it happened, and not to me but to the Head of a United Nations Agency. IMO Secretary-General C.P. Srivastava had been invited to a Conference on maritime affairs organized by the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) to be held at Caraballeda, an elegant seaside resort near Caracas. He had felt it a matter of courtesy to inform the Ambassador of Venezuela in London of his forthcoming visit to the latter's country, indicating that his business would be entirely with ICC. The Ambassador had insisted, however, that he be received at the level of the Government and said he would take all necessary steps to that effect with the Minister of Transport.

Being informed of the situation upon Srivastava's arrival in Caracas I set my Office in motion to ascertain what arrangements had been made for him to be received by the Minister of Transport. It soon appeared that nothing had been planned and upon our explaining the background of our enquiry, an appointment was given to us for the Secretary-General of IMO for 4 p.m. that afternoon. When we arrived at the Ministry a few minutes before the agreed time, the secretary of the Minister did not know what IMO was, she had no trace of an appointment for a Mr. Srivastava, and the Minister was out of his Office and not expected to return to his desk for the rest of the day. I greatly admired the way Srivastava remained calm and composed. The greatest shock, however, was to come to him in the evening. We had proceeded together to Caraballeda to attend the opening reception of the ICC Conference, and the Minister of Transport warmly welcomed Srivastava without a word of explanation, not to speak of apology, for what had taken place, or rather not taken place, in the afternoon. That, more than the mixed-up appointment itself, hurt Srivastava who however, as the true gentleman he was, did not let show any of his feelings. I was myself lucky. I could think at the time of more than one Head of Agency who would have immediately phoned Bradford Morse and asked him to remove from his post that good-for-nothing Resident Representative who was not even able to set up a schedule of appointments for a visiting dignitary.

## **59. Getting to know the country**

The preceding story might be somewhat harsh as an

introduction to my presentation of the vision I gained of Venezuela by serving in that country for two-and-a-half years as UNDP Resident Representative cum United Nations System Resident Co-ordinator. So even though a true story, please take it as a friendly caricature ! My understanding of the job I was now filling had always been that it would afford the opportunity to get a more thorough grasp of a country than was the case from a Headquarters. Santiago, Beirut or Nairobi, not to speak of New York and Geneva, had been bases for regional or global activities. I was now in a position, I thought, to concentrate in depth on a single national situation. Venezuela has taught me the limits of the approach. Short of engaging into academic or at least systematic research in history, politics, economics and sociology which I hardly found the time nor the energy to undertake beyond a certain level of generality, the hoped for deeper understanding will entail a considerable amount of sheer impressions, and those might well be largely influenced by personal experience or feelings.

Having thus excused myself for any impropriety or misjudgement, I would say that informality has been indeed the first thing that struck me in Venezuela. I have always found absurd the pretension of some senior UNDP officials to receive in their position as Resident Representative the same treatment from the Government to which they are accredited as an ambassador of a sovereign country. On the other hand, a minimum of consideration in their treatment seems to me to befit respect toward the United Nations. When I first arrived at Caracas Airport on my taking up my post, I was met by the officer-in-charge of the UNDP office. Absolutely nobody at any level from the Government side had bothered to come and welcome me. A rather sober reception for the accredited

representative of the world Organization ! I was left to philosophically remember the advice received from the Ambassador during our recent lunch in Geneva.

Living in Caracas, one could not be indifferent to the duality of the Venezuelan capital's society. With the have's occupying all the flat ground at the bottom of the valley and the have-not's perched in the most visible way in the shanty towns, known as barrios, on the slopes surrounding them, the reality of the coexistence of those two worlds was before our eyes at all times. Our office, as well as those of the Government with which we were in contact, were all in the valley bottom, and so were our accommodation and the dwellings of people with whom we were in contact either professionally or socially. The hill slopes were a foreign world. It was in particular through taking frequently a back road through Petare to the Valle del Tuy that we could have a close look at the shanty towns of Caracas, with their maze of poles carrying unmetered electricity cables and television antennas. While the two worlds rarely met, culture interestingly sometimes offered a bridge between them. In terms of music, I shall revert to the matter below, as it involved the UNDP. But it was also notable to see the public flocking to the collections and the special exhibitions at the National Museum. Some visitors obviously had come down from the slopes, at times carrying along small children, trying to understand and appreciate paintings or sculptural art. I found this particular role of culture a noteworthy phenomenon of Venezuelan society.

The already mentioned informality was indeed in Caracas a general feature of social relationships. It accounted for a

generally quite relaxed atmosphere often exempt of protocol. This informality sometimes reached an extreme, however, which could give a headache to ladies hosting guests. It was not uncommon for a gentleman invited for dinner to show up late accompanied by one or two uninvited and unexpected friends. This was in the case of sitting dinners a disaster which led to that kind of arrangement to be largely abandoned. Laxity in observance of mentioned time also led to the practice of quoting in invitations different times for national and foreign guests in the hope of having them all show up more or less together. On the other hand, important events could be quite solemn and subject to strict protocol. I was trapped for more than three hours, properly dressed in black tie, in the funeral ceremony for Romulo Betancourt, venerated as a father of the Venezuelan democracy. Rumour also had it that in Caracas, passers-by could be quite mauled if they did not take their hat off when walking in front of the statue of Bolivar in the Plaza Mayor.

The upper and middle class was very political, torn between the two poles of Copei and the Acción democrática, seemingly enjoying without worries the democratic life of the country. Was it the oil effect that made the political establishment so self-confident ? The national currency, the bolivar, had been until then solidly pegged to the dollar and the economy seemed quite dynamic. The country was also generous in its reception of political refugees. There was in particular at the time a large group of Chilean intellectuals who had escaped from the clutches of the Pinochet regime. A number of them had had close association with CEPAL in Santiago and felt related to the United Nations. It is in the home of a former Ambassador of the Allende Government that we spent a family dinner and

evening with Isabel Allende, then on the verge of sending to the editor the manuscript of her first novel, *La Casa de los Espíritus*, which had just been read by her mother, wife of the Ambassador.

Both duty-related and private travel allowed me, and most of the time also Marg, to get to know the striking variety of Venezuela's geography. We visited every one of the five identified main regions of the country, i.e. the coast, the coastal mountains that include the valley of Caracas, the central plains or llanos, the Andean cordillera and the tropical forest. Even this typology does not do full justice to the variety of the country's geography, it being difficult to include in it the Zulia or the Gran Sabana. The Sociedad Audubon Venezuelana, offspring of the celebrated eponymous North-American Society, was of invaluable assistance in helping us discover the various facets of the country's extremely great diversity. This diversity, incidentally, is remarkably well reflected in the writings of the great writer Romulo Gallegos, who wrote a series of novels each of which takes place in one of the regions of the country, covering both nature and society in fascinating narratives. I can truly say that reading Gallegos was for me of most valuable assistance to better know Venezuela in all its beauty and complexity. A number of other writers have produced novels which I found of major interest to enlighten for me the history and the sociology of the country.

## **60. UNDP Resident Representative in Venezuela**

My posting in Caracas started in a somewhat entangled manner, with the mishandling described above of my double accreditation. I found, however, a pleasant atmosphere and received a warm welcome in the office, which was running smoothly under the interim leadership of Robert Leigh since the departure of Navajas Mogro. It was in all respects akin to my expectations in the light of the contacts I had had with other UNDP offices in my previous positions.

As stated by my predecessor, my new function as Resident Coordinator was not really bringing anything new to the job. It became relevant from a new angle, however, in view of an unfortunate initiative by UNDP which played havoc in the whole United Nations System and also occupied me for some time. The resources available to UNDP were not growing at par with its proposed programme, a matter of considerable concern generally. Under the guidance of the then top administrative official of UNDP, Pierre Vinde of Sweden, very much the initiator and proponent of the idea, an attempt was made to develop the policy of having UNDP field offices charge for services they gave to Agencies, the latter being billed and asked to reimburse UNDP. The proposal was running counter to the whole history of UNDP field offices, which had most of the time been considered by countries that hosted them as offices of the United Nations at large to all extent found necessary or useful. This was particularly the case in Latin America, as illustrated by a story told by Gabriel Valdes, former Foreign Minister of Chile and at the time Director of UNDP's Latin American Bureau. I heard him more than once

mention a conversation he had had with United Nations Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim. The latter had bitterly complained about the fact that while Valdes had his network of representatives in the field which could keep him in constant touch with life at the country level, he as Secretary-General was lacking any comparable mechanism, bemoaning the absence in the United Nations of a network of ambassadors as he had had at his disposal when Minister of Foreign Affairs of Austria. It is true that in Latin America, this perception of UNDP offices as being United Nations offices has been widespread, sometimes way beyond the System and in the political sphere. In Chile, for instance, the UNDP Santiago office played an important role during the crisis provoked by the Pinochet uprising and the ensuing regime. It had been for instance the channel used by opponents to alert the United Nations of the arrest of Valdes, who had been soon released as the result of international pressure.

In normal circumstances, it was the local UNDP office that made arrangements for visits by the Secretary-General, Heads of Specialized Agencies or other high officials of the System. That office was also relied upon for communications concerning the business of the System's entities way beyond matters involving UNDP, for instance contacts between the governments and the regional economic and social commissions, The proposed approach of charging users for such services struck me as patently flawed, a feeling that was broadly shared by UNDP staff in the field. Needless to say, Agencies were also dismayed at the idea and very strongly opposing it. The need for additional resources was such, however, that UNDP Headquarters put pressure for a long time on its field offices and specifically demanded that this new

financial policy be implemented. Good sense finally prevailed, however, and the idea was shelved. But the issue occupied a significant amount of my time in Venezuela.

As for the UNDP country programme of co-operation with Venezuela, the institution and its procedures were by then well established and did not give rise to any particular problem. Relations with the counterpart unit in the Government, located in the Foreign Ministry, were friendly at all times. Economic planning in line with CEPAL's doctrine had been adopted in Venezuela also, and the Planning Ministry was UNDP's main counterpart in the Government. The profile of the programme was on the whole similar to many others in the region. Three projects, however, all three rather unorthodox, have remained in my mind from my Venezuela experience as particularly noteworthy.

Infrequent occurrence in a country programme, one of our projects was carried on by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) based in Vienna acting as Executing Agency. Based in Maracaibo, the project had as its objective to obtain a genetic modification of the sorghum cereal in order to render its harvest and post-harvest handling more amenable to mechanisation. Maracaibo being the centre of the oil-producing province of Zulia, the project, headed by an Indian scientist, was a reminder that agriculture was also an important dimension of the country's development. What strikes me today about this project is the fact that more than fifteen years before the explosion of the bitter public debate about the acceptability of genetically modified organisms, an experiment was carried on in this field by the IAEA very quietly and to my knowledge

without any question asked about the potentially negative effects of the process.

In a quite different sphere of activity and relating to a very different problematic, I still keep in mind the lesson I learned from a project concerning civil aviation. The country programme had carried for quite a number of years a project consisting of ensuring the training of technical personnel for the running of the national Caracas Airport at Maiquetia. The project visualized that beyond ensuring the availability of trained technicians for Maiquetia, it would provide the civil aviation authorities with sufficient trained personnel to staff the other major airports of the country. The results of the project were unfortunately very poor. Experts assigned to the task of training local staff had been very dissatisfied with the response of the trainees and with the lagging co-operation received from the airport authority. Already my predecessor had had difficulty, in reviewing the implementation of the project, to give favourable consideration to requests for its continuation. I was in my second year in Caracas when the matter came up again. The situation having been once more thoroughly reviewed, the consensus in the UNDP office was that we should approach the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) based in Montreal, which was the Executing Agency, and suggest that the project be terminated.

My raising of the question with ICAO was quite sobering. Their reaction was sharp and to the point. The Maiquetia training programme, they said, ensured through the presence of international experts posted as trainers the normal functioning of the Caracas Airport as a point of overflight or stopover of

cardinal importance in the traffic between North and South America. Should the project be closed, Panagra and Eastern Airlines would be immediately in trouble there, and in a matter of days the United States Federal Aeronautics Agency would be yelling from Washington at ICAO asking them what the hell was happening in Caracas. Needless to say, the continuation of the project was approved by UNDP. ICAO, on its part, pledged to pursue its efforts to ensure in due time the training of national personnel which could take in hand the technical management of the Airport. And I felt a bit wiser from the experience. Technical co-operation is such a complex game, demonstrating in this case the important hidden function that might be exercised by a seemingly routine project.

The third project which stuck in my memory was again of a very different nature. When studying for the first time the country programme, I noted in it with keen interest, but also considerable surprise, a project entitled Assistance to the Venezuelan Youth Philharmonic Orchestra. Upon enquiring from the staff in the office, I learned that this reflected the view strongly held by Gabriel Valdes in his capacity as Head of the UNDP Latin American Bureau, that culture was as much part of development as economics or social affairs. In line with that thinking, Headquarters had found it acceptable to have this project proposal inserted into the country programme. From the development angle, the project was considered particularly worthy, inasmuch as the venture it supported was not aiming to attract the youth of the privileged classes. Those already had access to classical music thanks to the importance attached to that activity in affluent circles - an activity, incidentally, which Marg and I could observe and often enjoyed during our stay in Caracas. The objective of the venture was to offer access to

playing classical music to the youth of the under-privileged majority of society mostly living in shanty towns, thus motivating them to concentrate their time and energy on a constructive activity. I was elated. UNDP contribution was very modest, but responding to specific requirements formulated in the form of project proposals submitted by the Government on behalf of the venture. I remember one day our office welcoming a group of no less than four experts reaching Caracas to meet one of those requirements. Four experts for a relatively short assignment, wasn't that a bit much ? It turned out that they were the four members of the Portland Quartet, invited to advise members of the orchestra on problems of interpretation and the best practice of their instrument.

It is with considerable expectation that I met the person who had to be credited with both the idea of involving the youth of the barrios in playing classical music in an orchestra, and the energy to carry through such a daring project. Jose Antonio Abreu was a truly exceptional personality. He had been Minister of Economy in a previous government, and was when I met him completely involved in building up and conducting the symphonic orchestra he had painstakingly assembled after organizing the teaching of the various instruments involved, identifying the more talented girls and boys and coaching them as players in an orchestra. I was soon fascinated by seeing Abreu conducting working and rehearsal sessions, and I developed with him a friendly relationship. Marg and I became regular members of the audience at concerts given by the orchestra under his direction. He organized in 1982 a concert dedicated to the United Nations in which we were guests of honour. The level of performance attained by those young people under Abreu's direction never ceased to astonish us. It is

one thing to conduct the performance of a piece by Stamitz or even Mozart, but the conductor was demonstrating equal dexterity, and the orchestra equal mastery, in playing a symphony of Gustav Mahler !

Chatting with Abreu, it occurred to me to ask him one day why he had come to the idea of asking for assistance from the United Nations for his project. The whole venture had acquired a dimension and a dynamism which required considerable resources which he obviously had at his disposal. The mere providing of instruments to players, most of whom could hardly afford them by their own means, surely represented in itself an enormous sum of money. What the United Nations could bring as an added resource was probably insignificant. Abreu's reply remains engraved in my memory. He said - we were talking in Spanish : "Pero Señor Berthoud, el paraguas azul !" The blue umbrella ! He went on to explain that the fact that the United Nations was associated with his project was of paramount importance to strengthen the credibility of the venture and stimulate sponsors. Whatever may be our financial contribution, the prestige gained by the fact that the United Nations supported the orchestra was for him invaluable. It certainly was heart warming to hear such testimony. There is, after all, another dimension to the dream of 1945 in setting up the World Organization which is today so often vilified.

The classical music venture for the Venezuelan youth has since my time in Caracas incredibly prospered, and it is today known world wide. The Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra, which assembles the most talented elements formed by the programme, has given concerts at Carnegie Hall in New York and in the Concert Hall of the Berlin Philharmonic, the latter in

a performance that has been shown internationally on television. A documentary of 2007 presented on Arte has given a comprehensive picture of the gigantic effort made to capture the interest in classical music of the youth in Venezuela's poor segment of the population - the other side of this dual society. Figures quoted were staggering, with one-hundred-and-fifty orchestras scattered over the country, several of them now professional. The documentary, which gave due credit to Abreu for his cardinal role in the venture, showed among others Simon Rattle and Giuseppe Sinopoli conducting the Orchestra in Caracas, with Rattle exhibiting an enthusiasm that spoke for itself as to the quality of the response he elicited from the players. A relentless effort of nearly thirty years is bearing fruits that are very real and very concrete. The cultural and the social worth of the programme both do homage to this extraordinary enterprise.

In addition to travel within Venezuela referred to earlier, I also had the opportunity to travel in the region on the occasion of being designated as Representative of UNDP at regional meetings. This brought me, accompanied by Marg, in particular to Panama and to Cartagena de las Indias. I may add that Marg and I also undertook during our stay in Caracas two memorable private trips in the region. One was to the Galapagos where we discretely celebrated my sixtieth birthday. The other was in Grenada, still quiet and unspoiled a few months before the United States invasion, with a stopover to see the Trinidad carnival in Port of Spain.

I would finally mention, as a note of disappointment, that contrary to my expectations, my post as UNDP Resident

Representative in Venezuela hardly involved me in contacts with SELA, CORFO or the San Jose Oil Facility. With Perez Guerrero back in opposition, Venezuela also was taking a much lower profile in North-South politics than had been the case when I had been in UNCTAD. That meant less pressure on the job than anticipated, which also had its bright side. Caracas has been for me a relatively quiet time, which both Marg and I greatly enjoyed. We also came to the conclusion that we should not prolong unnecessarily our stay in Venezuela. My sixtieth birthday had passed unnoticed at Headquarters, and we set the next one as the target for my retirement. As could be expected, Morse asked me to stay longer in the post, but I had made up my mind and retired on 31 May 1983. We then resettled in Geneva, without having at the time any clear idea of what would be the profile of my post-professional activity.

## **X. Post-retirement professional activities**

### **61. Facing an active post-retirement professional life**

My post-retirement professional life has been very rewarding and exciting, in good part because I went on significantly learning and broadening my horizon. As a result of the fact, I suppose, that my career in the United Nations Secretariat did not unfold in one groove, but across a number of different settings, officials in different entities have felt that they could still use my experience in using my services as a consultant. I had thus the privilege of engaging in consultancies in a variety of fields of activity. Incidentally, I think that it is one of the remarkably positive features of the United Nations, that it does not let the whole accumulated institutional experience of staff members instantly fade away upon retirement. I know it irritates the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly and it is contrary to the practice of many governments, and I don't deny that abuses may occur. But on the whole, I would take the view that the use of retired persons in order to explore new avenues of activity is a very useful way of keeping alive the much needed but often floundering institutional memory of an organization.

The other major dimension of my post-retirement activity has been teaching. I was known to have lived through a number of

different situations involving various facets of the work of the United Nations, and also to have shown considerable interest in the life of the Organization in general. This had included, it will be recalled, teaching about the United Nations at the University of Neuchâtel before joining the Organization. Aware of the course of my career and in particular of my legal background and experience, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) approached me soon after our return to Geneva. I was asked whether I would be prepared to participate in the post-grade legal training programme for professionals of developing countries that had been set up by the United Nations Legal Office and in which UNITAR was actively involved, and to develop in that programme a module on international trade. Somewhat concerned about the challenge it posed to me and the work it would entail, I nevertheless accepted the offer. This was the first step in a venture which contributed in a decisive way to enriching my retirement days with a steady exploration of new frontiers of my knowledge.

## **62. Consultancies**

I undertook consultancies intermittently from the very first days after retirement until the time I decided, fourteen years later, to entirely give up professional activities. During all that period, the consultancy work in which I engaged was interspersed with a fair volume of teaching. I shall deal with the latter in the next section of this narrative. It should only be kept in mind that teaching and consultancy, though conceptually and administratively distinct, were thoroughly intermingled in my post-retirement professional activities.

My first consultancy took place at the initiative of the Director General for International Economic Co-operation (DIEC). Requests for my services then came from various entities of UNDP, from UNCTAD, from the International Trade Centre (ITC), and in one case from UNEP and in another from the Swiss Government. According to my records, it is a total of no less than 26 consultancy assignments I undertook between 1983 and 1996. I must confess that I was boastful enough to also keep a list during that time of the consultancy offers I declined, which turned out to be significantly more numerous than those I accepted.

Emerging from the relative isolation of UNDP Resident Representative in charge of a single country programme, I was abruptly projected into the complexity of the United Nations System as a whole. Interrupting my repatriation travel upon retirement, I stopped in New York early in June 1983 to respond to a call by DIEC to participate in an exploration of the question of the harmonization of field procedures within the United Nations System. The post of Director-General of DIEC had been created by the General Assembly in 1979 as a watchdog over the resident co-ordinator system introduced at the time. I had the occasion to refer to that new institution earlier in this narrative in relation to my arrival in Venezuela at the beginning of 1981. The initiative of DIEC was indicative of the general atmosphere of concern that prevailed at the time within the System as to the adequacy of the arrangements under which the United Nations, its autonomous entities and the Specialized Agencies were co-operating. The issue was particularly sensitive in respect of activities in the field. It

would never cease to haunt me in the coming years and was to culminate in the Turin Programme to which I shall turn later.

True to political correctness as applied to the United Nations System, DIEC's exploration was entrusted to a team of two consultants, I would come from the UNDP, as presumably the major provider of multilateral resources for field activities. The other consultant was to be from a Specialized Agency, as representative of the views and interests of the executing agencies that were spending those resources in the form of development projects. He had been chosen in the person of Prabha Kumarakulasinghe, a senior official of the International Labour Organization (ILO). Prabha was particularly well placed to represent the collective interests of the executing agencies. He had been recently seconded from ILO to a newly created inter-agency co-ordination office. Located in Geneva, that office was meant to facilitate contacts and the interchange of information among the main partners of the System. It was also to provide a more steady support for the preparation and holding of inter-agency meetings. Prabha and I worked hard for a few days in New York on an analysis of the problem we had been asked to address. We finalized our conclusions in Geneva in the following weeks, in a paper which made some recommendations while also pointing to some of the difficulties inbred in the System as it had been conceived and had evolved. More important for me than this small step in a long path in search for a better functioning United Nations System, this first consultancy was the occasion for Prabha and I to get acquainted. This was the beginning of a strong and steady bond of close friendship which developed between us. In point of fact, I became in later years a very frequent visitor to his office. We shared long conversations and in the exchange

of papers our convergent ideas about the weaknesses of the System we served and about the way of making it work better. He became one of the co-architects of the Turin Programme. His sudden premature passing away deprived me of a close friend, and the System lost with his death an exceptionally intelligent and visionary servant of our cause.

## **62a. UNDP**

The first call I had from UNDP for a consultancy job, harbinger of a long and varied collaboration, came from Bradford Morse personally in the Fall of 1983. I was invited to New York where I found myself to be one of a team of about 18 people, some retired but also some still in active service in UNDP or in DIEC. We had been called together to prepare ourselves to fan out in a vast field enquiry conceived as the backbone of what was labelled a "Study on Measures to be Taken to Meet the Changing Technical Co-operation Requirements of Developing Countries". The very title of the study was another revealing indication of the state of affairs in the United Nations System in respect of development co-operation. Ever since the drama of the Jackson Report and the deliberations leading to the UNDP Governing Council Consensus of 1970, the System had worked toward adjusting itself to the modern vision of developing countries' governments being the masters of the programme of development co-operation. However, accountability for the use of resources put at the disposal of the programme by donor countries remained vested in the UNDP bureaucracy that administered it. New equilibria had to be designed and worked out to find solutions acceptable to all parties, and work on that account was still in progress. In

addition, a major factor overshadowing the whole scene was the progressively shrinking volume of resources available to finance development activities. It was the accumulation of those concerns that had made the UNDP Administrator wish to conduct the study which was being launched.

We had several meetings in New York working out the specific elements of the discussions to take place in the field. Each of us was then assigned to visit one of the countries chosen for the enquiry. For my part, I was asked to concentrate on Brazil, and also to sound out CEPAL in particular in relation to its concern for certain regional and inter-regional activities. I thus visited Brasilia and Santiago de Chile and delivered to UNDP Headquarters two separate reports on the results of my discussions. I then lost somewhat sight of the further fate of the study. I distinctly remember, however, two dimensions of our collaboration on this project which were of special interest to us with reference to our experience in the field. Indeed, two new concepts had emerged in the previous years and were still the object of controversy within UNDP, i.e. on the one hand cost sharing, and on the other government execution.

Cost sharing consisted in having a government recipient of UNDP assistance co-financing, through resources of its own, part of the cost of the country programme. In other words and crudely put, a government could buy from UNDP specific inputs in that programme which would presumably have otherwise been left out for lack of funding. Projects thus financed were treated in all respects with the same attention and subjected to the same discipline as UNDP-funded ones. This facility had been introduced a few years earlier and it did

not in itself raise controversy. It had become the object of considerable discussion, however, to the extent to which a line of thought had developed according to which it could become the only source of funding for UNDP activities in middle income developing countries, with UNDP funding being allocated entirely to supporting the development of the poorer countries. Particular concern about such a trend was felt in Latin America, and the Brazilian and the CEPAL officials I had interviewed during my mission had been quite emphatically stressing the need for UNDP to maintain its support to all countries in the region. I had myself strongly made the same point in a paper I had presented two months earlier in Berlin at a Roundtable on Technical Co-operation in the Development Process organized by the German Foundation for International Development. My paper, entitled Technical Co-operation in Latin America - A Partisan View, in which I had included a statistical analysis of development indicators, has been published in the report of the Roundtable.

Government execution, on the other hand, was a very new concept. It consisted, as clearly spelled out by its very name, in having projects included in a country programme executed directly by the recipient government, renouncing the designation of an executing agency. The concept was not yet operational, and it was the object of a very lively and at times stormy debate both within UNDP and in the System at large. It was to be fully expected that agencies which had theretofore been invariably called upon as executing agencies for projects in their field of competence, would oppose such a facility on principle. But UNDP officials themselves were sharply split on the issue. Some welcomed the idea as innovative and fully responsive to the new orientation of development co-operation

heralded by the Consensus of 1970. Others, and I was articulately one of them, opposed the concept on the ground that it eliminated from the process the external additionality that was the very *raison d'être* of development co-operation. The concept had the ingredient, I was arguing, of UNDP becoming a financial agency handing out checks to governments. The Brazilians were at that time clearly of the same view. If it was something they could do themselves, they said, they would find the money and do it. It was the element which they missed that they were seeking in external assistance.

Maybe my recollection of our discussions about government execution is particularly sharp because this was the one and only issue about which I ran into complete disagreement with my close friend Stig Anderson. I had known Stig, a Dane, since the early sixties, when he was already a senior official on the operational activities side of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Through the years, we had sat together in different capacities in many inter-agency meetings. Sharing the same vision of the mission of the United Nations and of the role of operational activities in the pursuit of its mandate, we had developed solid bonds of friendship and had been comrades-in-arms in many battles fought in the process of refining our procedures. Our personal relations having grown deeper, we were often spending time outside official meetings discussing our problems and reshaping the world as we would have liked it to be. Stig was one of the 18 people called by Morse to look into the problem of the future of technical co-operation requirements. Without it altering in any way our deeply rooted friendly relation, it was for me a shock to see him enthusiastically endorsing the concept of government

execution and defending it with strong conviction. After lengthy discussions, I had to come to the conclusion that Stig truly considered government execution as the only logical ultimate consequence of the so-called Consensus of 1970, by which the UNDP Governing Council broke away from the paternalistic approach to development co-operation of earlier years and made it clear that the developing countries themselves were the masters of the development programme of the United Nations. I did not remain closely enough connected with operational activities after 1983 to be able to pass judgement on the evolution and effects of the government execution facility. As for Stig Anderson, he retired to his country Denmark and our relations got looser. The news of his premature death in the isolation of idleness reached me a few years later and left me with a feeling of sadness but also the acute memory of glorious times at the service of our Organization.

I was involved in early 1985 in another assignment reflecting the Organization's search for its bearings in the evolving world. UNDP was asked to review, or more accurately stated to redraft, an Overview of the Objectives and Plans of the Organizations of the United Nations System which had been rather hastily prepared by an inter-agency mechanism. The style of my first papers having presumably been appreciated within the house, I was asked to join the team of officials engaged in this task. Luis Gomez, Assistant Administrator, was in charge of the project. I spent over five weeks in New York in February and early March working in particular on the segment of the overview covering the Bretton Woods institutions. The research I had already undertaken in their regard for my teaching assignments was in this context very valuable. For

some reason unknown to me, it had been decided that the overview would not be subject to consultations with the agencies concerned. This predictably created some difficult moments with the representatives of the International Monetary Fund and of the World Bank, with whom I entertained friendly relations in the inter-agency meetings in which we had been sitting together for many years. In the end, the Overview paper faded away from the horizon of inter-agency affairs and I was never able to ascertain what had been its ultimate fate.

Beyond the two major UNDP projects referred to up to now, I was called between 1983 and the mid-nineties to engage in a number of consultancies for UNDP. Not all of them, naturally, were as much centred on the role and functioning of our operational activities as the one referred to at length in the preceding paragraphs. But I had been involved in one way or another in that side of the United Nations mandate all along my career, from my mission in Lebanon in 1956, through the different positions I had held in CEPAL, in UNESOB, in UNCTAD, in ITC and in UNEP, to my posting as Resident Representative as my last job before retirement. I therefore maintained a great interest in all aspects of the life of UNDP and readily responded to their calling on my services as a consultant.

Between 1984 and 1988, I was invited five times by UNDP's Latin American Bureau to join their staff in New York and work on the drafting or review of policy papers in relation to meetings of their field and Headquarters staff. I was also asked by the Bureau to assist in the review and finalization of the country programmes in Nicaragua in 1985 and in Panama in

1988. The Bureau for Arab States followed suit by inviting me to assist its local offices in the finalization of the country programme in Syria in 1986 and in Jordan in 1987, and to undertake the same year an exploratory mission to Qatar. Except in Doha where UNDP did not yet have a presence, those assignments to be carried out in the office of the Resident Representative, that it be in Managua, in Panama, in Damascus or in Amman, always had a psychological dimension of some complexity. Whatever explanation might be given for the dispatch of a consultant, the fact remained that Headquarters had not considered the programme presented by the official in charge on the spot to be acceptable as such, and someone was sent to assist him or her in working out a better presentation. The implication was potentially vexing for the person in charge as a reflection on his ability to perform the job with which he had been entrusted, and this was a point of which I was acutely aware. I dare say that I was lucky enough to succeed in every case in making the incumbent feel that Headquarters assistance was a welcomed addition to the good job already done by the local office. I should say that this delicate psychological exercise was greatly facilitated, in particular in Damascus and in Amman, by my rather good knowledge of the local and regional scene and the recollection of personal experience in those countries. Having worked in CEPAL was also to some extent an asset in Managua and Panama, though Central America had never been as close to Santiago de Chile as it had been to its Mexico office.

The Africa Bureau of UNDP, on its part, called twice on my services during my active retirement. The first time was in 1985 to be the team leader of a mission to Mali to assess the results and review the scope of a project on the development of

international trade co-operation. Financed by UNDP, the project was executed jointly by UNCTAD and ITC, and both agencies were requested to designate an official to work with me. This was of course for me familiar ground, and I knew well the two staff members who joined me in Bamako to carry out our mandate. This made for a very smooth working of our team. The mission spent twelve days in Bamako and finalized its report upon return to Geneva.

## **62b. Namibia**

The other request of the Africa Bureau came in 1989. I was asked whether I would be prepared to join a two persons team, to be headed by Ahmed Abdallah, former Director in the International Monetary Fund and Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Kenya, to carry out a reconnaissance mission to Namibia on the Financial, Economic and Socio-economic Aspects of the Arrangements for Independence. It was made clear to me in presenting the offer that while for obvious political reasons, the mission should be headed by an African political figure, I would be fully expected to be its backbone in ensuring that it would carry out its mandate in conformity with United Nations objectives and practice. This was to be in an overall United Nations perspective the most important of all the consultancies I undertook after retirement. It was being set up in response to a Security Council Resolution urging that economic and financial assistance be provided to the Namibian people, both during the transitional period and after independence. This was quite new ground for me. I was very interested in the prospect of broaching the economic and social dimension upon the political process of independence now

engaged, and I gladly accepted the assignment.

The consultancy was called a reconnaissance mission, in particular because of the necessity to identify a number of parameters which were blurred as to the way in which the Republic of South Africa had handled to date the affairs of the territory of South-West Africa, now soon to become the independent country of Namibia. Considerable attention had been given by the international community to the country-to-be and numerous studies undertaken from outside the territory, in particular in Lusaka where the South West Africa People Organization, SWAPO, had its Headquarters and the United Nations Institute for Namibia was located. Some basic information was missing, however, that would be vital for the launching of an independent Namibia. The mission was therefore requested to ascertain the availability of information on assets and liabilities of the territory, its budget, trade arrangements, ownership of companies and economic activities, and actual and potential human resources. For that purpose, it was invited to get in touch with all relevant United Nations System organizations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Commonwealth Secretariat and any other relevant sources - obviously meaning *inter alia*, without saying so, the Government of South Africa.

The mission assembled in New York on 3 April 1989. Working without interruption, we visited Washington, London, Geneva, Lusaka and Pretoria. We then spent 24 days in Namibia, visited again Lusaka on the way back to New York where we finalized the mission's report and completed our task on 8 June. It is a pleasure to be able to relate that during that long and mostly

hectic peregrination, my relations with Ahmed Abdallah were constructive and friendly at all times. He was a cultivated and sophisticated gentleman who never at any point acted as chief of mission in a way that would have caused me the slightest embarrassment in my position in relation to his own. To be honest, when it came to facing the problem of the disentanglement of the finances of South-West Africa from those of the Republic of South Africa, it was reassuring to have as co-consultant a colleague specialized in public finance. Abdallah was a fervent Moslem, and we spent considerable time during our free moments talking about the theology and practice of his religion. He was obviously a leader in his religious community and known internationally as such. During our stay in Windhoek, he made a short visit to Durban to meet Moslem leaders.

The major shock of the mission came for me when reaching Johannesburg. I am, after all, a member of a society which in a generation has taken the greatest care to abide by a strict boycott of all and any product coming from South Africa. In point of fact, it was the country itself which we deliberately blurred in our thinking, a country which we would never visit and with which we would have nothing to do except for protesting its apartheid policy. And now here I was, accompanying a gentleman whose racial profile certainly was not that of a white supremacist, prepared to move to Pretoria to have a series of meetings with important members of that country's Government. And the visits indeed included the Reserve Bank, the Department of Finance, the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Development Bank of Southern Africa. Let me hasten to say that we were received everywhere in a very civilized way, nowhere cordially, but at times with

courtesy and always at least with the required element of politeness. The Government had finally lifted its veto on the move to declare the independence of Namibia and it was co-operating with the United Nations in the implementation of the plan agreed for this purpose. But we were still the personification of a world Organization that had chastised them for a long time, and the adjustment to the new situation was understandably for some of the officials of the Government rather difficult.

We reached Windhoek as the military wing of the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) was moving into the city, where the personnel of the first of 20 participating countries had arrived. I felt for a moment projected back almost thirty years, so reminiscent was the scene of the days of Léopoldville in 1960. Parks of trucks and jeeps, movements of vehicles in all directions, temporary offices jammed with officers seeking guidance, blue helmets working on taking their positions, blue berets idling in expectation of instructions, this had all the features of a peace-keeping operation on the move. It was, however, a very special and unique operation. UNTAG had been designed more than ten years earlier, in 1978, by the Security Council as a mixed military-civilian operation, as part of a broad plan aimed to lead Namibia to independence. The plan had been worked out by a group of five countries, i.e., the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Canada and Germany. South Africa had accepted the plan in principle in 1980. It had made the reservation, however, that the independence of Namibia could not be proclaimed as long as Cuban troops would not be withdrawn from Angola, and stubbornly held to that position for many years. The United Nations had never accepted the South African stand on this

issue, but neither had it felt appropriate to proceed against their will. Lengthy tripartite negotiations between Angola, Cuba and South Africa had ensued, mediated by the United States. They concluded at the end of 1988 with a tripartite agreement, as well as a bilateral agreement between Angola and Cuba providing for the phased withdrawal of Cuban troops, to be supervised by the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM). The way had thus been cleared to set into motion the plan approved in 1978 mapping the process that was to lead to the independence of Namibia.

The civil administration of South-West Africa was still very much in place when our mission arrived in Windhoek. We thus embarked in a lengthy series of meetings aiming to obtain the information required in pursuance of our terms of reference, the thrust of which was clearly financial and macro-economic. This included all the top echelon of the local government, in contacts which took place in an positive atmosphere similar to that we had found in Pretoria. The mission was able to identify and get hold of a number of documents and sources of data which had been up to then only available locally. We also had interviews with key actors of the parastatal and private sectors, as well as with members of foreign liaison or observer missions. In the private sector, the Germanic presence was very palpable, both in business and culturally. I privately attended an evening concert given by a local symphonic orchestra the level of which was certainly on a par with any good German ensemble, and where as much German as English was spoken in the all-white audience. In point of fact, the whole situation in which our mission found itself was from a racial angle rather odd. All our official contacts were with white officials of the colonial administration still in full charge of public affairs. The

forthcoming generation of political and administrative leaders was not yet present. We had met them in Lusaka and would see them there again on our return. The South African administration did nothing to put us in touch with any of the local people who would undoubtedly play a role in the affairs of independent Namibia. The situation would be quite different when I returned to Windhoek two years later to teach in a regional training course on international law organized by UNITAR.

Before leaving Namibia at the end of our mission, Abdallah and I decided to take a week-end trip to the Atlantic shore to see a bit of the back country and primarily to visit Walvis Bay. That port city was administered by the South African authorities as South African territory and not considered by Pretoria to be a part of South-West Africa. The Namibian independence movement claimed Walvis Bay as part of the country it sought to establish. The issue of the future of that territory was one which weighed heavily on the whole process of moving toward independence. We were thus keen to see the place with our own eyes. Having driven through the desert, we spent the night in Swakopmund, a sea resort city the German heritage of which was glaringly apparent. The border crossing the next morning to Walvis Bay was uneventful, but clearly subjected in terms of documentation and search to the routine of classical international border control. The city itself was without particular interest or charm. It exhibited all the features of a large sea port with its hangars and cranes. Without being overly attractive, the residential areas were pleasant enough with large zones of single houses. We crossed the international border back to South-West Africa by mid-afternoon and reached Windhoek only long after nightfall.

We moved during our whole stay in Windhoek in the shadow of the Acting Special Representative for Namibia of the United Nations Secretary-General, who was responsible in situ for the implementation of the plan for independence drawn up and adopted by the Security Council. The post was filled at the time by Martti Ahtisaari of Finland, already then a veteran in United Nations affairs, who received us warmly on our courtesy call upon arrival. His attention was understandably fully absorbed, however, by the deployment of UNTAG and the political process now engaged, and we had little opportunity to see him again during our stay in Windhoek. His office was kept fully informed, however, of the progress of our mission and of our findings.

The UNDP asked again for my services as consultant at the end of 1989. The question of the coherence of the United Nations System in the delivery of the programmes of its component parts was as burning as ever. The UNDP had been mulling on the issue for some time, and it was suggested that I could usefully take stock of the state of affairs and put together the elements of a proposal for a United Nations System Programme in the Management of Field Co-ordination. This was to be the forerunner of the Turin Programme to which I shall devote a later section of this narrative. It is in that context that I shall revert as may be necessary to the above consultancy.

## **62c. UNCTAD and ITC**

After my retirement, UNCTAD called two times on my services as consultant for a major project, while a third involvement with it was short-lived and ended in an impasse. Gamani Corea asked me early in 1984 whether I would be prepared to join a team of consultants entrusted with the task of looking into the problem of strengthening programme evaluation in UNCTAD. He was setting up what could truly be described as a dream team, and I readily accepted. The other consultants were George Davidson, former Under-Secretary-General for Administration, whom I knew well and for whom I had great respect, and two close colleagues and friends, Michael Zammit Cutajar and Jorge Viteri de la Huerta. I had had several dealings with Davidson on behalf of both UNCTAD and UNEP when he was the administrative top boss in New York. It was obvious that he should be considered as the head of our team, but he always staunchly refused that the matter be formalized and insisted that the four consultants be invariably listed in alphabetical order, even in our final report circulated to governments. The subject of evaluation had become in the early eighties the *tarte à la crème* of good management. The General Assembly itself had in 1983 requested that the Secretariat review all possibilities available to strengthen evaluation units and systems, and governments had played the same tune in the Trade and Development Board. We worked for several weeks in Geneva analysing the problem as it presented itself in UNCTAD. Our conclusions offered the profile of a comprehensive evaluation system and suggestions for its organization and management. Our report was endorsed by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD and transmitted to the Trade and Development Board in August 1984.

UNCTAD approached me again in the Spring of 1988, this time with a proposal of a quite different nature. I was asked whether I would be prepared to study the question of institutional arrangements for commodity study groups and present my conclusions on the subject. Such a mandate was for me doubly attractive. It would plunge me again into the field of the regulation of commodity trade which had been my pet subject in my UNCTAD days. It also appealed to me as a lawyer, immersed as I was in refining my teaching in the framework of UNITAR's legal training programme. I thus accepted to embark on what would turn out to be possibly the major single intellectual exercise of my post-retirement activity. I devoted to it most of my time between the beginning of May and the middle of July of that year.

International commodity study groups had been in existence for many years side by side with international commodity organizations or councils. The latter were created by agreements negotiated by producing and consuming countries, the purpose of which was to ensure the regulation of the international trade in the commodity. The two major instruments used by such agreements for controlling the market were either quota or buffer stocks, or a combination of both. At the time, commodities like coffee, sugar or tin were the object of such agreements. International commodity study groups were also created by agreements negotiated by producing and consuming countries. Their objective, however, was not regulation of the trade through intervention in the market. Less intrusive, they aimed to promote co-operation between producers and consumers by ensuring transparency at the levels of production, trade and consumption of the commodity, by providing a forum for the exchange of information and

consultations, by undertaking as appropriate studies on issues concerning the commodity, and by considering possible solutions to special problems that may arise or be expected to arise in respect of the commodity. In other words, they offered a soft approach of non-regulatory co-operation, as opposed to interference in the market. Such study groups were in existence for lead and zinc, nickel and rubber. Organizations, councils and study groups were all considered as intergovernmental organizations.

The specific question which UNCTAD had asked me to address was that of the merits of establishing commodity study groups within the structure of UNCTAD, as compared to their being established independently outside UNCTAD. Already ten years earlier, the matter had been debated at great length in the framework of a series of meetings on copper. The meetings had been called in the expectation that there was general agreement that such a study group be created. The issue as to whether it should be set up within UNCTAD or outside UNCTAD had, however, dominated the deliberations from beginning to end and led to an impasse. The matter was later raised in meetings concerning iron ore, tin, nickel, and again copper. UNCTAD had meanwhile diligently attended to the requirements of its Integrated Programme for Commodities which called for the negotiation of regulatory agreements for a large number of commodities. In the late eighties, it was already apparent, though, that the general trend in the international commodity trading community was moving away from regulatory mechanisms. Hence no doubt the active interest of UNCTAD in clarifying the question of the most appropriate design for the institutional setting of study groups, the demand for which would undoubtedly increase with the growing lack of

willingness to regulate interference in the market.

After considerable background research and extended consultations within the Secretariat and with government representatives in Geneva as well as with several commodity communities in London, I produced a report which, though on the whole highly technical, could not avoid trespassing into the realm of power politics. I reread with amusement in working on the present narrative the letter that Ken Dadzie, who had succeeded Corea as Secretary-General of UNCTAD, had sent me at the time. Very positive and thankful for my valuable and thought-provoking report, he went on to say that he and his senior colleagues had given careful consideration to the question of disseminating it. Given the delicacy of some of the issues I had raised, they had considered that it would be best to keep the report as advice to the Secretary-General of UNCTAD. They were meanwhile drawing on it and looking into ways of implementing several of my recommendations in connexion with proposals concerning copper and tin.

I had endeavoured to carry out my assignment transparently and in a fully honest manner. True to the mandate I had received, the first part of my report had presented over thirty pages a detailed itemized balance sheet of the advantages and disadvantages of having study groups established outside UNCTAD or within UNCTAD. Many of the parameters involved were quite neutral. Others, like budget control and operational flexibility on the one hand, or the existence of a broader institutional context and cost savings on the other, might theoretically incline governments to choose one or the other formula according to their interests.

In a second part of my report, however, I went on to state that my enquiry had led me to the conclusion that the above considerations did not amount to a total picture of the issues at stake and the forces at play in the debate on the choice of the best institutional setting for commodity study groups.

Arguments put forward on technical grounds often tended to blur the fact that in a significant number of developed market-economy countries, governments and industry alike had a basic anti-UNCTAD bias which made them reluctant to visualize the establishment of study groups within UNCTAD. Study groups being in their view essentially meant to facilitate co-operation at the technical level among economic agents most often from the private sector, they should be insulated from the ideological and conceptual context which UNCTAD would unavoidably bring to bear on their activity. On the opposite side, many governments of producer developing countries attached importance to study groups being established within UNCTAD precisely because of the frame of reference which that organisation provided by taking an overall approach to the field of commodity trade as part of its mandate to link international trade and related problems of development.

The emperor had no clothes ! Such had been for the last ten years the real issue at stake, blurred by a wealth of technical arguments and bickering about detailed aspects of a technical nature. Present in everybody's mind, that issue had probably never been exposed in any official document as clearly and precisely as I had done in my report. The Secretary-General and the Directorate of UNCTAD obviously thought at the time that nothing could be gained by so doing, and this was why

they decided not to issue my report as an official document. I had nevertheless fulfilled the balance of my mandate by presenting in a third part of my report a detailed view of possible organizational arrangements for commodity study groups in the case of their being established within UNCTAD. I do not have any information about the state of affairs today in this regard, but I can well imagine that the general trend toward commodity trade liberalization which has swept through the world has also negatively affected the role of UNCTAD on that score.

The third call I received from UNCTAD was a short-lived affair. At the beginning of 1991, in the wake of events surrounding the impending collapse of the Soviet Union, I was asked to sound out UNDP in New York about their interest in supporting an operational programme for the expansion of trade between developing countries and individual countries in Eastern Europe. In a series of meetings, UNDP officials gave me the two reasons which would prevent them from supporting at the time any such programme. Considerable concern had been recently expressed among developing countries about the possibility that UNDP resources might be diverted from actual recipient countries to provide assistance to East European countries. The Administrator could not ignore these views and he would not be in a position to move on the issue without guidance from the Governing Council. Furthermore, Eastern Europe was at this time the object of a very considerable number of supply-driven initiatives from a variety of sources. UNDP would need a clear guarantee that there was a clear demand for whatever assistance it would support. Conditions were not at hand at this time to ascertain whether this was the case. Not unprepared, I forcefully argued UNCTAD's case, but

I was finally compelled to report to them that my mission had been unsuccessful.

I also undertook between 1984 and 1987 three consultancies for the International Trade Centre. At the request of Executive Director Göran Engblom, I devoted from January to March 1984 six weeks to a study on the allocation of responsibilities and the utilisation of resources in the Centre. I had been for many years the official of UNCTAD entrusted, together with a colleague from GATT, with the joint UNCTAD/GATT oversight of ITC, and I had been for nearly a year Director a.i. for Programmes of the Centre. This background, plus the fact that I had been for several years disconnected from those activities, made Engblom feel that I could give him an objective and dispassionate overview of the managerial state of affairs in the Centre. It was not at the time an altogether happy setting, in good part because of the persistence of an uneven repartition of the weight of work in relation to staffing and hierarchical positions. We had several occasions to review the orientation of my consultancy as it progressed. We recognized that the international civil service is in a particularly difficult position when it comes to assess the capacities and motivations of people from different cultures and backgrounds. Performance is then the main instrument at the disposal of the manager. I made in my final report a number of concrete observations and suggestions, while underlining that we were still a fairly long way from being in a position to apply a scientific formula to the vexing problem of the coexistence of overwork and idleness in international organizations. Consultants are often left after their task is completed with a question in their mind as to whether their work will receive the attention it deserves, in particular when they have been asked

to deal with non-substantive matters. It was heart-warming for me to see a few years ago my 1984 report wide open, with annotations on the margin, on the desk of J. Denis Belisle, who had replaced Engblom as Executive Director of ITC. Belisle told me that it was still for him a topical document in respect of the management problems of the Centre.

My two other consultancies for ITC were not related to problems of management, but substantive. The Centre was keen to put its competence at the disposal of the effort which the World Bank had launched with its structural adjustment programmes and its assistance in the form of sectoral loans for export-oriented industries. I worked for several weeks for ITC in the first months of 1986 on an assessment of the relevant World Bank activities and on the trade development support strategies and initiatives that the Centre might develop to participate in those activities. My findings, shared with Engblom and his senior staff, were the object of a comprehensive position paper which I finalized for submission to a high level group of experts, presenting a detailed strategy and recommendations for an ITC contribution to the Bank's effort.

One year later, ITC asked me whether I would be prepared to carry out for them a major project. The Joint Advisory Group UNCTAD/GATT had decided that the programme described as Supply-Demand Surveys should be the area of activity of the Centre to be evaluated in 1987, and ITC was desirous to entrust me with the task of meeting their request. The scope of that programme was clearly defined as relating to the promotion of trade among developing countries, or South-South trade. The

programme consisted at the time of three projects financed by UNDP, involving countries respectively in Asia, in Eastern and Southern Africa, and world-wide. Two other projects financed by the Netherlands were also to be brought into the picture. The evaluation was to be carried out in three phases between May and October : desk research at ITC Headquarters, field visits to eight countries actively participating in the programme, and report writing and presentation to the Advisory Group. The eight countries to be visited were Sri Lanka, Thailand, the Philippines, Colombia, Uruguay, Zimbabwe, Zambia and the Côte d'Ivoire. The task was highly challenging and the offer of ITC a great mark of confidence. I accepted the assignment.

The Headquarters part of the mission, both before the field work and for the writing, discussion and finalization of the report, took place in familiar territory. I felt quite at home in ITC Headquarters. The field work, on the other hand, was another story. I knew for having spent some time there several countries on the list of those to be visited. To others I had never been. Their spread made rather complicated the organization of the visits. We decided that the Asian and Latin American countries should be covered by a trip around the world, and the African ones be the object of a separate trip which would entail an East-West crossing of the continent. All visits were well planned and prepared by the Centre. Those covering officials from government and trade promotion parastatal organizations were very informative, but not unusual in terms of setting and interlocutors. On the other hand, my road map called in all visited countries for some interviews in the private sector. A number of exporters and of importers known to have been engaged in trade operations with other developing countries

had been selected for that purpose.

Those traders were generally small manufacturers or distributors, and visiting them turned out to be the most fascinating part of my mission. Some of them operated in sectors of the city hardly ever visited by tourists or expatriate officials, and I remember more than one of the UNDP drivers put at my disposal raising eyebrows when I was giving them the street address of the person I wished to meet and interview. Only in Bogota and Manila, however, did I feel for a while uncomfortable, probably without any real reason, in terms of my personal security. In Zimbabwe, it happened that one of the important persons to be contacted resided not in Harare, but in Bulawayo, and that allowed me to know another part of the country. My interviews with the private sector were a precious source of colourful and most often judicious comments about the purpose and implementation of the ITC programme of South-South trade promotion. It might well be the wisdom thus gathered that led me to take in my final report the most unusual step of prefacing each of the seven chapters of the report with an epigraph. They were successively attributed to a senior ITC official, a project co-ordinator, a trade promotion organization official, an importer, an exporter, a chamber of commerce official, and to the consultant. This unorthodox presentation was the object of complimentary remarks during the debate of the Advisory Group which scrutinized the results of the evaluation thus presented. The report itself was well received and must have been considered a useful piece of work, as ITC was thereafter approached from several quarters enquiring about my availability to undertake other missions in the field of trade promotion. Preliminary steps leading to the Turin Programme were already mapped and soon to be taken,

however, and I did not engage in any further consultancy in connexion with the activities of ITC.

## **62d. Swiss Government**

I had only one opportunity to act as a consultant for the Swiss Government, albeit in relation to a fairly important project. The reason for this is easily explained. The rule in Switzerland was at the time, and I think still is, that development co-operation consultancies must be the object of open competitive bidding. I had taken the decision in my mind at the time of my retirement that I would not at any point and in any way ever take the initiative of seeking a job as a consultant. There was thus no prospect of my working as a consultant for the Swiss Government. The exception confirming the rule came in 1985 at the initiative of a Swiss diplomat. Eric Roethlisberger had represented Switzerland for a long time in the Trade and Development Board and in some sessions of the UNCTAD Conference, and we had developed warm friendly relations. When Berne was faced with the task of mounting an evaluation of the Swiss participation in the major dam and hydro-electric project of El Cajón executed by the World Bank in Honduras, it was felt that the job could best be entrusted to a team of two consultants, one being an expert on the technical aspects of the project and the other a specialist looking at its socio-economic dimension. Roethlisberger, who was then Délégué aux accords commerciaux within the Office fédéral des affaires économiques extérieures (OFAEE), considered that I would be particularly suited for this latter function. He approached me about my interest and a correspondence followed which was sufficient to validate the choice made at his suggestion. I also

was designated chief of the mission. The other consultant was Chrisophe Bonnard, a geologist and specialist in dam building, Professor at the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale in Lausanne. He and I had the most cordial and constructive relationship throughout the project, and celebrated its success by having him and all his family as guests in Chambeaufond after our report had been scrutinized and approved in Berne.

After preliminary contacts in Switzerland, the Mission visited Honduras for 16 days in October 1985. The Swiss Development Co-operation office in Tegucigalpa, headed by Peter Spycher, was most helpful to us at all times. Having been informed of my consultancy, Hugo Navajas Mogro, who was Director of the Bureau for Latin America of UNDP in New York, instructed the Resident Representative in Honduras, Ricardo Tischauer, to put all the resources of his office at the disposal of the Swiss mission. I already knew Tischauer well. His deep knowledge of the country and its leadership as well as his friendly advice were very valuable to us, and our bonds of mutual respect and friendship were considerably consolidated through this opportunity we had to co-operate. At the price of a considerable joint effort, Bonnard and I submitted our report on the mission to OFAEE within two weeks of our return to Switzerland. After several meetings in Berne, the final version of the report was issued before the end of November.

It always struck me that there was something odd about that evaluation. The project was directed by the World Bank which was its essential source of financing. The total envelope of the project was at the time estimated to be in the order of 600 million US dollars. The Swiss Government had joined the

venture by granting to the Government of Honduras a mixed credit of 31 million Swiss Francs, half of which financed by the Government and the other half by a consortium of private Swiss banks. At the exchange rate prevailing at the time, the total contribution of Switzerland represented thus barely over three percent of the total cost of the project, and the Governments participation half of that. In spite of the modesty of this involvement, the mission I headed was asked to proceed with an evaluation of the whole of the project, with seven pages of specific and detailed terms of reference (*cahier des charges*). I had wondered what would happen, and what might be the consequences, if our findings were to severely clash with World Bank policy as reflected in the project. That question had not appeared to bother anybody in Berne. Their point was that Switzerland having put money in the venture, we had a duty to check what had happened to it and whether the loan was justified from our point of view, and this could only be done by making an evaluation of the whole project. We thus proceeded accordingly, and this comprehensive mandate made for a truly exciting mission. But the question has remained in my mind.

The major issue that finally enlivened this assignment was fairly fundamental. What was the true nature of mixed credits, and how should they be identified in terms of Swiss foreign policy ? We had found out in our research prior to leaving for Honduras that the request for such a credit had first been considered by OFAEE in 1979 following an approach by a Swiss private enterprise. After careful and lengthy consideration, the decision had then been negative. Honduras had not been in the list of countries eligible to receive mixed credits and the project, while promising positive economic and

developmental effects, was of uncertain significance for the poorest segments of the population and for rural development. The enterprises interested in the project were Brown Boveri and Co. and the Ateliers Mécaniques de Vevey, both of which were keen to participate in the equipment of the power station. They must have been already quite involved in the situation, as the question of the Swiss participation in the project was reopened by OFAEE a few months later following receipt of a letter from the Minister of Finance of Honduras to the Swiss Ambassador. The Minister made reference to the proposal of a financial export credit which the national entity in charge of the project had received from a consortium of Swiss banks, and asked the Federal Council "to consider the possibility of approving for the project a development credit in relation to the financing of exports already offered by Swiss commercial banks." Soon thereafter, the World Bank in Washington sought information from the Swiss Embassy about the disposition of Switzerland to participate in the co-financing of the project. Intense consultations followed between all interested parties, as a result of which the OFAEE in mid-February reversed its previous decision and decided to approve a mixed credit for Honduras for the co-financing of the El Cajón project. A number of conditions were attached to the granting of the credit. Those were later more than once adjusted after consultations with other interested parties, in particular in relation to the process of attribution of contracts to the bidding enterprises.

"Water over the dam", as an interlocutor aptly said when we were discussing our findings in Berne. Our report analyzed as required by our brief the utilisation of the mixed credit. We threaded carefully through the issues of the choice of the

country and of the choice of the project, giving a fair description of the meandering argumentation of OFAEE for justifying its reversal of position. Going back to the relevant legislation, we noted that there was undoubtedly a certain ambiguity as to the place of mixed credits in Swiss development co-operation policy. The law made a clear distinction between financial assistance and commercial policy measures. Mixed credits were defined as belonging to the category of financial assistance, but also often referred to in the context of economic and commercial policy. We noted that this ambiguity had the merit of allowing for flexibility in the practice of granting mixed credits. It should not make us lose sight, however, of the dual nature of this instrument as a tool for development co-operation and at the same time a tool for supporting the Swiss economy. Messages of the Federal Council to the Parliament had never attempted to hide this dualism and made invariably reference to the beneficial effects of mixed credits on the Swiss economy because of their link with the export of goods and services. Our report ended with the presentation of a number of recommendations aiming to clarify and improve the use of mixed credits. In relation to my concern referred to earlier concerning the independent approach chosen by Switzerland to evaluate the project d'El Cajón, we recommended that the endorsement of the international institutions could be more visibly inserted in the process of examination and approval of project proposals.

It is unfortunate that our last meeting with our main counterpart in OFAEE ended with our discussions being overshadowed by the problem of the ambiguity and duality of the institution of mixed credits. The man was obviously obsessed with the notion that mixed credits were to be treated fully and

unreservedly as development assistance financing, and he expressed deep regret at the reservations we had aired in that respect in our report. He wanted to clearly demonstrate that a pure and incorruptible OFAEE had its policy entirely oriented toward development co-operation, and that there was no room in its approach for considerations relating to the Swiss economy. There was in his position something so axiomatic and dogmatic that it verged in my mind on the pathetic. Rarely have I been faced with somebody so perfectly embodying the famous saying : "I have made up my mind. Don't confuse me with facts !" I consulted after the meeting my colleague Bonnard, and we decided to leave intact in the final version of our report our considerations concerning the play of forces that are active in the game of examining and approving proposals for mixed credits. Let me state that our evaluation report was on the whole very well received, including in OFAEE as our interlocutor that last day had finally conceded. Roethlisberger on his part sent me some time later, on the eve of the meeting of a parliamentary commission due to deal with Honduras, a letter in which he praised the valid approach of our report, its relevant observations and its recommendations. He said that they merited thorough consideration on the part of the administrative services concerned, adding that he would see to it that they received the attention they deserved.

## **63. Teaching**

### **63a. International Trade Law**

The offer I had received from UNITAR upon retirement to give lectures on the legal aspects of international trade within its ongoing programme of training in international law was for me an ambivalent proposal. Some of the work of UNCTAD such as Commodity Agreements or the Generalized System of Preferences, with which I was fully familiar, fell within the realm of actual international law. A module on international trade law should also trace, I thought, the history of international co-operation in that respect, both institutional and substantive, from the Havana Conference of 1949 to the challenge posed by the developing countries to the legal order instituted by the West. A brief presentation of the alternative international trade legal order advocated by the countries of the South would also fit into the module. I felt in a position to readily work out that part of the course to be prepared.

The unescapable fact, however, was that the hard core of positive international trade law rested with the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). This treaty had developed through the years as an incredibly complex web of rules and interpretative decisions, and a very dynamic one at that. It had been almost since its beginning the object of a succession of rounds of negotiations aiming to improve its functioning and perfecting its objective of ensuring the greatest possible freedom of trade among its contracting parties. Our objective in UNCTAD having been to develop an alternative legal order for the regulation of trade between developed and developing countries, we were naturally familiar with the basic tenets of the GATT system which we sought to bypass. My general knowledge of the GATT did not encompass, however,

the arcane subtleties of the General Agreement's practice. And importantly, I was from the outset very aware of the fact that a legal training course should concentrate on the presentation of the legal order, and should not be turned in any way into a battle ground for ideological confrontation.

I thus had to plunge head on into a detailed study of the General Agreement and its intricacies, leaving aside all my prejudices about the institution and attempting to objectively present its principles and practice as clearly and concisely as possible for the benefit of the target audience of the legal training programme. The programme was offered as post-graduate training to lawyers from developing countries, presumably chosen among the brightest of those who had indicated interest in a curriculum that might be particularly useful in the search for a job in diplomacy or in an international organization. The task was daunting but at the same time exciting, and I felt immersed again for some time with great satisfaction into a quasi-academic atmosphere. Time was short, but I somehow succeeded in putting the story together and I gave my first lectures on legal aspects of international trade at The Hague in the first days of August 1983, as part of the annual UN / UNITAR Programme on International Law held under the auspices of the International Law Academy located in that city. Following almost immediately, my second participation was in a similar programme offered to participants from Latin American countries and held in Buenos Aires at the end of September. I was proud at the time, and still am today, for having then made my presentation and conducted the ensuing discussion in Spanish.

As a first occurrence of a situation which I would repeatedly face in coming years, I was approached after giving my course in the Hague by an entity external to the United Nations and asked whether I would be prepared to teach in one of their training activities. The enquiry came from the International Law Academy, which was housed in the Hague Peace Palace and beyond providing the premises for the UN / UNITAR Programme, was not in any way unknown to me. I had been awarded in 1948 a fellowship by the Academy in recognition of the quality of my doctorate dissertation, and attended that year as a student its Summer Training Programme. The Secretary-General of the Academy was now Professor Jean-René Dupuy, a world-renown international lawyer, whom I had seen a few times on the occasion of gatherings I had attended during my tenure as United Nations official. He had even once invited me to give a set of lectures on a subject of my own choice - I fondly remember the generosity of that gesture of academic freedom - in the framework of the international law programme at the University of Nice of which he was in charge. The subject I had then presented had been The international regulation of commodity trade. Dupuy now asked me whether I could make a presentation along the lines of the lectures I had just given for UNITAR, within the framework of an international law training programme to be held in the Fall in Brasilia as an external session of the Academy. I readily accepted and gave at the end of October in the Brazilian capital my course on the law of international trade.

Emboldened by my Buenos Aires experience, and noting that most participants were non-Brazilian Latin Americans, I proudly started my presentation in Spanish. Hearing of it after my first class, Dupuy got visibly upset and expressed deep

regret at my not having stuck to speaking French. Considerably troubled, I explained at the beginning of my next class my dilemma to the students, a bright group of post-graduate young lawyers. They emphatically insisted, however, that I should go on giving my teaching in Spanish, and so I did. Obviously displeased, Dupuy never reverted to the matter, but I could not avoid feeling that he deeply resented my behaviour, and the incident cast a durable shadow over our relationship. The Hague Academy never again asked me to collaborate in one of its programmes. Dupuy was soon afterwards appointed as a member of the Collège de France. I saw him since then only once, and casually as part of a group of people. I have never been able to erase from my mind the idea that the Hague International Law Academy - l'Académie de Droit International de la Haye, as they would always call it irrespective of the linguistic context, was being seen by the French as an important vehicle to ensure internationally the prominent place of French as the preferred language of the intellectual and academic elite.

From 1983 to 1989 and in 1992 and 1993. I presented nine times in The Hague, in both English and French, the module on international trade law within the framework of the UN / UNITAR annual training programme on international law. UNITAR in addition organized further regional training programmes as it had in 1983 in Buenos Aires for Latin America. I participated in such programmes in Yaounde in 1984, in Bangkok in 1986, in Brasilia in 1988 and in Windhoek in 1991. During all that time, I followed with considerable uneasiness the disaffection of which commodity agreements were progressively the object and the trend toward abandoning them as instruments for the regulation of commodity trade. On

the other hand, following the implementation of the results of the then concluded Tokyo Round of multilateral trade negotiations, monitoring the launching, unfolding and successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round and the preparations for the setting up of the World Trade Organization, required constant attention and the maintaining of a reliable monitoring system that would allow me to present at all times up to date information about developments in GATT.

This task became for me particularly important when I was invited in 1991 by the European Studies Institute of the University of Turin, and in 1992 by the Centre d'Etudes des Relations Internationales (CERIS) of the Université Libre de Bruxelles, to give lectures specifically dealing with GATT as the only theme of my presentation. I was also asked at the same period to present the GATT on its own within the international administration programme of the Institut de Hautes Etudes en Administration Publique in Lausanne, by which I was solicited over the years to deal with a vast array of subjects related to the development activities of the United Nations System. The interest shown in my presentation by academic institutions not related to the United Nations was of course for me an incentive. I lectured for five years on the role of GATT in international trade in the Turin Institute Trade Law Post-Graduate Course. I participated twice in the annual programme de maîtrise en politique internationale of CERIS in Brussels and had in 1994 to decline their invitation to lecture again in the light of other commitments. During all that time, I followed GATT affairs very closely at a level which I would almost be inclined to describe as professional. I remember in particular the meandering about subsidies and dumping to be especially complex as we lived through the two transatlantic crises of the

Pasta War and the Airbus controversy. I was proud to be in a position to make in 1992, in response to a specific request made in the context of a broader subject I was treating, a detailed technical presentation of the GATT mechanisms and procedures for dispute settlement. And reality sometimes offered the anecdotal relief we needed during the study of such serious matter. Thus the Japanese firm Brother having delocalized part of its production to the Mid-West of the United States, Japan filed a complaint against the United States targeting its rival American firm Smith Corona for unfair competition because it had allegedly drawn illicit advantage from delocalizing production to Thailand. I am confident that globalization has since that time taken care of such situations !

### **63b. Multilateral Economic Negotiations**

Immersed as I had been in the Fall of 1983 in developing my presentation on the legal aspects of international trade, UNITAR nevertheless asked me to consider the possibility of putting together the elements of another set of lectures, based essentially on the experience I had gained during my long association with UNCTAD. The Geneva multilateral scene was indeed very complex, with its several informal and formal circles of consultations and negotiations, and in particular a very active system of groups meetings. Diplomats newly assigned to their Geneva Mission felt often quite dazed, especially if they had been theretofore working in a bilateral setting. UNITAR was actively trying to assist government representatives to face their task by offering them training courses in multilateral diplomacy. As a complement to their effort, they asked me to develop an induction course around the

theme of multilateral economic negotiations which could be offered primarily to the staff of Missions accredited to the United Nations in Geneva. My deep interest in academic teaching, dormant since the Neuchatel time, had already been awakened from the legal angle, and I readily accepted the new challenge of moving into the political cum sociological and psychological world of negotiation.

I thus gave in December 1983 a first course on multilateral economic negotiations offered to newly arrived members of Geneva Missions. Rated most successful in spite of the haste with which I had put together a presentation essentially based on personal experience and observation, this was to be the first of a long series of training events I would conduct over more than ten years. I clearly felt the need to insert my own perception of the process of negotiation as I had lived it, into a conceptual and rational framework. Parallel to my continuing effort to keep abreast of legal developments in the field of international trade, I thus ventured into the academic side of negotiation, which I soon found to be a very fertile and well trodden field. Having started with the Harvard Negotiation Project and Roger Fischer's ubiquitous *Getting to Yes*, I ended up reading and collecting a number of books, studies and informal papers, and assembled a small library covering the subject all the way to Russel Sunshine's targeted *Negotiating for International Development*. I worked toward inserting a rather extended personal experience as witness of multilateral negotiations, as well as descriptions of some notorious negotiations that had taken place within the United Nations, into the identified categories of parameters concerning negotiation described in conceptual analysis. Presentation of the institutional setting, negotiations in GATT / WTO, North-

South and commodity negotiations was then followed in my lectures by general considerations concerning negotiation types, styles, strategies and tactics, as well as a description of the factors of success and of failure that can be identified when analysing a negotiation, I ended up distributing to participants a list of suggested reading, as well as a number of handouts spelling out in writing various major points of my presentation.

I also became aware early in my research of the importance attached in this field to the value of simulation exercises as a training tool. Their use had been developed originally by the military establishment and described for some time as "war games" even when the method started to be used for non-military purposes. Simulation exercises were found particularly useful, when properly managed, in identifying and illustrating the various facets of the behaviour and moves of participants in a negotiation, and also for an assessment of what went right or wrong in a negotiating process. Having devoted some time to studying the matter, I started to almost invariably include a simulation exercise as part of my teaching on multilateral economic negotiations. Such an exercise, extending preferably over a whole day, and sometimes and ideally overnight, became a standard element of the training I was offering. In order to be really useful, the exercise necessitated close and constant supervision by an arbitrator or referee, a role which I always took great pleasure in performing. These simulations bringing into play governments, it was important, if the exercise was to be really useful, to maintain it within the framework of a credible course of events. If for instance a participant was advancing a proposal which would be blatantly inconceivable on the part of the government he represented, he had to be stopped. I more than once had to intervene as the

referee and give him a hastily drafted note of instruction purportedly emanating from his foreign minister, reminding him of the incongruity of his proposal from the point of view of his government's policy. The ex post analysis of what had happened during the exercise was generally truly fascinating and very much enjoyed and appreciated by the participants. We retraced the course taken by the simulation against the major parameters of the conceptual analysis that had been presented in the preceding lectures, and generally thereby obtained a clearer understanding of the various components of the process of negotiation.

The result of this blending of conceptual analysis, description of practical experience and simulation exercise was apparently considered very valuable and my lectures became in high demand. The programme for officials of the Geneva Missions was given yearly up to 1996, sometimes even twice a year, once in English and once in French or just in order to meet the overflow of demand to participate. UNITAR had been asked by the Institut International d'Administration Publique (IIAP) of Paris, (the successor of the colonial Ecole de la France d'Outre-Mer) to organize a Geneva segment in its training programme for young African diplomats. In 1984, my module on multilateral economic negotiations was made part of that segment, and I presented it in that context for six consecutive years as well as in 1995. As of 1990, IIAP invited me to participate in their basic diplomatic training activities in Paris, and I lectured several times at their Headquarters up to 1996, once in English as part of a new programme offered by the Institute in that language. UNITAR also organized a number of regional or national training programmes in developing countries either centred on multilateral economic negotiations

or in which this subject was part of a broader curriculum. I thus gave my lectures on negotiation, generally followed by a simulation exercise, in Libreville in 1984, in Guinea Bissau in 1985, in Lusaka for SWAPO the same year, in Libreville again and in Nairobi in 1986, in Paramaribo and in Conakry in 1987. Paramaribo, incidentally, was a particularly interesting experience from the gender angle. The course had been organized by the Foreign Service Institute. I was faced with an audience that was about two-thirds women, and one-third men. That intrigued me because it did not correspond to anything I had seen in other countries. I thus asked the organizers how they had gone about the selection of participants. The answer was disarming and quite heartening. They simply said that they had advertised the course and chosen the best candidates.

My teaching on negotiations brought me later to Seoul in 1990, to Bangkok in 1991, to Hanoi in 1992 and to Ramallah (Bir Zeit University) in 1994. This latter included a simulation exercise starting an early afternoon and extending over four consecutive half days. To sum up, a considerable portion of the time I devoted to training was increasingly taken by that line of teaching, with a constant refinement of my presentation and of the related simulation exercise in the light of accumulated experience. The teaching requested from me was more and more often almost entirely centred on the process of negotiation as such. This became the case in particular for a course on negotiating skills I gave in 1995 and 1996 in Turin for senior officials of the Ministry of Economy and International Co-operation of Egypt, for my participation in the same years in seminars on multilateral diplomacy for junior diplomats of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy, and for my presentation to IIAP in Paris, which was labelled in 1996

Atelier de formation à la négociation internationale.

### **63c. Multilateral economic relations and institutions**

While UNITAR had been very much concerned, in the light of the situation in Geneva, with the problem of multilateral negotiations, it also engaged as part of its mandate into more general diplomatic training for young professionals from developing countries. It organized for that purpose courses both in Geneva and in the field. While associated, as mentioned above, with some of those programmes, I was also soon asked to broaden for some courses the spectrum of my institutional presentation and include in it the essentials of international monetary and financial issues.

The first request I received to do so was in 1984 for a training programme in basic diplomacy for Namibia to take place in Geneva, in expectation of its impending independence. The organization and delivery of this programme was entrusted by UNITAR to the Centre for Applied Studies in International Negotiation (CASIN), which asked me to present a module on "Major problems and issues of international economic relations". This was thus to include at least a general coverage of the questions of the international monetary system and its evolution, development financing, and the problem of the debt of developing countries, as well as the issues of shipping economics and of economic co-operation among developing countries. Whereas I felt reasonably familiar with the two latter fields, international shipping regulation and South-South trade having been the object of active consideration in UNCTAD, the

principles and functioning of the Bretton Woods institutions were quite another matter. This was yet another challenge to face if I was prepared to see this other dimension be added to my teaching. I daringly decided to accept. I went back to reading and research and immersed myself as I never had before into the principles, structures and activities of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The arcana of the Fund's facilities, in particular, appeared to be highly complex and retained at length my attention. Similarly to what had happened with GATT, an important aspect of the problem consisted in developing access to sources that would ensure a credible flow of current information about developments and decisions in the two institutions.

Having lectured with CASIN in the Namibian programme to the expressed satisfaction of both the participants and the organizers, I was invited by CASIN on several occasions in the following years to deliver my module on international economic relations and institutions. It was in particular the case for a programme offered to diplomats and international civil servants in Geneva in 1987, and for training programmes in diplomacy that brought to Geneva groups of students from Vietnam in 1989, 1990 and 1991, and from Albania in 1992. In all those years, the problem of the surplus of money engendered by the second oil shock, the ensuing irresponsible frenzy of lending and the resulting debt burden of the developing countries loomed quite large in the preoccupations of the students in whatever context I broached the subject. It would allow for my lectures to be spiced up with anecdotal references, often drawn from serious books. Thus the famous quote of City Bank's President not long before the Mexican crash that "sovereign debtors do not default", or the story of the

broker coming back beaming from a very poor developing country capital to his Bank's Headquarters with the message: "I have good news for you. They may be able to take your money" pocketing in the process a net commission of two per cent of the capital lent.

### **63d. Teaching activities, 1983 - 1996**

Based on old files of official papers and personal agendas, I have attempted to give below the list of the teaching activities in which I engaged between 1983 and 1996. Only such a list can convey, I think, an overview of the variety of the situations in which I was involved in fourteen years of lecturing. For each event I give as available the date, place, general theme, participation, and sponsor. In the list, "all LDC's" means a course open to participants from any developing country, "Missions" means open to staff of Missions accredited to the United Nations Office at Geneva, "Regional" refers to the region in which the event is held.

The list shows actual teaching activities as a function of training. It does not contain references to my participation in seminars, colloquia or roundtables, nor to speeches or public lectures I may have delivered during those years. The list also omits meetings I have attended within the framework of consultancies in which I have been engaged, as well as all activities I undertook in relation to the Turin project which will be the object of separate reporting here (link missing).

## **64. The Turin Programme**

As indicated in the section above dealing with my consultancies, UNDP asked me in 1989 whether I would be prepared to carry out a study on the setting up of a training programme for resident co-ordinators and field representatives of United Nations System organizations. The idea had been aired in inter-agency meetings during discussions about the functioning of the institution of resident co-ordinators created ten years earlier. There was still considerable concern expressed that the formula which had been then introduced had not basically altered the unsatisfactory situation prevailing in many countries in regard to the co-ordination of the input of the System. The problem had been haunting inter-agency deliberations for a long time. After so much frustration about it at headquarters level, and so much grumbling by governments without much action on their part, the idea of attempting to tackle it from the field side through a training programme had been received with great interest. UNDP was the key agency involved in the matter in the light of its role as the manager of the resident co-ordinators system, and it was logical to entrust it with the proposed study. Its steps would be closely watched, however, as I was soon to find out.

Of fascinating interest to me because it projected me into the heart of the problématique of the structure and working of the United Nations System, my assignment called for consultations with all major agencies. In addition to my meetings in Geneva, I visited to that end Rome, Vienna, Paris, Washington, and New York. The idea was to hold in a campus, away from daily work pressure, workshops on the management of field co-ordination for country representatives of agencies of the United Nations

System. The workshops would bring together country teams and address a number of critical issues and topics related to both the development process and the United Nations System. As a result they would hopefully develop an approach that would ensure a better co-ordination of the System's operational activities in their country of assignment. The Turin Training Centre of the ILO had indicated its willingness to offer its facilities to host such a programme and to ensure its development, orientation and management.

In the major agencies, the ideas I presented were received at first with some caution. While all agreeing with the necessity to improve the performance of the System, they were also quite on guard to protect their autonomy. Some of my interlocutors openly said that they wondered whether UNDP, using training as a vector, might not wish to avail itself of the situation to build for itself a position of dominance and control over the System which other agencies were not prepared to concede. When the proposal to accommodate the programme in the Turin Centre became known, it was in turn ILO which became for a while suspect of wishing to use the proposed project for boosting its own position. In point of fact, both UNDP and ILO acted at all times during the preparation of the programme, as well as later during its implementation, in the most impeccably objective and impartial way. This was for me a source of great satisfaction. Dennis Halliday, who was in charge of the project for UNDP, fully accepted that the organization, orientation, and management of the project would be left to the Turin Centre, and ILO on its part refrained from interfering in any way in the manner in which the Centre implemented its mandate. Early suspicions were thus dispelled, and the programme development moved ahead in a constructive spirit and with

considerable support throughout the System.

The programme was swiftly put into place. I prepared a first paper which served as the basis for informal inter-agency consultations which were held in New York in December 1989. I then produced a revised report reflecting the results of those consultations which was transmitted to the Turin Centre. The latter submitted in April 1990 a comprehensive proposal to the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions of the inter-agency machinery. The Centre's paper offered a detailed consideration inter alia of programme objectives, target groups, contents, programme development and financial considerations. It presented a draft model curriculum comprising three modules, i.e., international development issues, the United Nations System, and co-ordination at the country level. The Consultative Committee also discussed the questions of the resource persons to be enlisted for delivering the programme, the duration of the workshops and their timing, and the materials to be put at the disposal of the participants. With preparations well in hand and the System mobilized, the First Workshop on Management of Field Co-ordination for Senior United Nations System Representatives was planned to take place in Turin in April 1991.

Hans Geiser, who had worked for a long time in UNITAR, was now with the Turin Centre. He was to be as Director of the project the centrepiece of the whole venture. He enlisted me as co-Director in a tripartite directorate comprising also Gary Davis, later succeeded by Nissim Tal. In addition to participating in the overall planning of the Programme, I was

also entrusted with the preparation and delivery of the second module of the curriculum concerning the United Nations System. As background considered necessary for a comprehensive approach to the subject, I proceeded with writing two papers which were distributed to all participants on the eve of the first workshop. One of the papers was entitled The United Nations System, and the other Agencies without field representation of their own : An overview.

I took particular pleasure in preparing the first of those papers. This allowed me to present a clarification of some issues which I thought were too often blurred in the minds of United System staff members, thus contributing to their lack of understanding of the real nature of the relationships existing within the United Nations conglomerate. One may remember that I had alluded to this problem twenty years earlier in a meeting convened by UNITAR, as reported in section 44 above of this narrative. My paper on the United Nations System still exists and there is no need to return here to its substance. I only wish to mention that in preparing it, I was acutely aware of the fact that the workshops were aiming to bring closer both the autonomous agencies of the United Nations itself and the Specialized Agencies of the System. Given the delicate texture of the constitutional arrangements involved, I stressed, coherence and co-ordination could not be achieved by diktat, but only by enlisting the goodwill and the co-operation of all parties. I would have the satisfaction of seeing that approach impregnate all activities of the workshops.

The second paper which I prepared was necessary to present an overview of the System as a whole. The terminology used of

agencies without field representation "of their own" was to be a reminder that the network of field offices of UNDP was available to any agency of the System which needed their assistance. Some of those agencies indeed participated in country programmes through projects for which they were the executing agency, and they were represented locally by UNDP to all necessary extent. As a result, those agencies often had operational staff present in some countries, as I had experienced with ICAO in Venezuela. But those were experts assigned to specific tasks and not vested with a mandate concerning co-ordination as representatives of the agency they served. This was a world somewhat apart and often less known by the officials of mainstream development agencies. I thus presented in my paper the elements of a typology of such agencies. A major category I described as technical agencies, the majority of them vested with trans-national functions. Such was the case in the fields of communications, transport, meteorology and intellectual property. The others I labelled development support agencies. I then reviewed in the paper a number of issues specific to the functioning of that group of agencies. We also decided from the onset of the programme that we would invite at each workshop in turn one of those agencies to send a senior member of their staff to attend the event. The gesture was to be appreciated and the response positive.

After the first successful workshop held in April 1991, the programme soon gathered momentum and I had by the Spring of 1995 personally attended each and every one of fourteen workshops, all in Turin except for one in Costa Rica and one in Thailand. For each workshop, we were bringing to Turin country teams the number of which varied from rarely only

three to generally four or five, depending on how many field representatives were actually posted in the invited countries. Participants were faced with a very tight agenda. The Turin Centre setting had features of a monastery, with everybody closed in and all meals being taken together. We also endeavoured to create the same atmosphere in Costa Rica and in Thailand, though Turin had in this respect definite advantages. Each time, an intensive programme tackled the three modules which had been agreed, with the aim of relating their substance to the basic problems that participants were encountering in the country in which they were working. We also made considerable use of simulation exercises, a tool about which I had acquired considerable experience through my teaching activity. Observing the country teams in action turned out to be for me a most interesting experience. The teams were of quite varied composition, depending on which agencies were represented in the country. And there was quite a variety among them in terms of the degree of co-operation which had already taken place in their country of assignment. We had sometimes the feeling that some were really sitting together for the first time. They might have met within the country in relation to the import of vehicles or on staff security matters. When it came to substantive issues, on the other hand, it looked as if they were facing for the first time the reality of trying to find out how their programmes were relating one to the other. Other teams, at the opposite extreme, were quite integrated, and it seemed that it was for them just another meeting. They had been used to sit together under the leadership of the resident co-ordinator and they were working already closely as a team. For them also, however, the curriculum opened new horizons which would allow them to improve their performance. In most cases, the cohesion of the

team could be identified as having existed at some variable point between the two extremes.

My verbal presentations of the subject of the United Nations System went way beyond the analysis offered in my paper, I linked the basics of the subject to the current state of affairs and recent events, such as the use or non-use of the Organization at the whims of great power politics, or the ill-placed and short-lived surge of optimism about the future of the United Nations System after the disappearance of the Soviet Union. The participants showed very considerable interest in this presentation, as evidenced in the ensuing discussions. It may sound somewhat immodest, but I had ample testimony and it can be said in all sincerity, I think, that my lecture on the United Nations System became one of the highlights of the workshops. In point of fact, a written transcript of what I said was soon produced at the pressing request of participants. I reluctantly agreed, with a front page footnote stating "The spoken word is to be heard and the written word is to be read. Violators of this golden rule, drafter and reader alike, proceed at their own risk". At a subsequent workshop, my lecture was taped in full and produced on video-cassette. After I had given up my participation in the programme, this recording was at least once shown to participants as the introduction to consideration of the module on the United Nations System. I heard with satisfaction that there had been some grumbling about the inability of the Programme Management to provide a live presentation of the subject. After all, we had been told in secondary school already "Souvenez-vous que dans la vie, on est rarement utile, et jamais indispensable". Rarely useful, but perhaps sometimes a bit nevertheless. It is hard to believe, but a Human Resources

Director in a Geneva-based agency told me in 2007 that she had found my Turin lecture a useful source for the preparation of a curriculum for new staff members. On my part, I have recently engraved the lecture on DVD, so that it is also available in that format. I also have had indications that my paper giving an overview of agencies without field representation of their own has found its way beyond the Turin workshops. It appears to have been occasionally considered useful for presenting a full picture of the United Nations System.

Interestingly the experience gathered during those workshops did point in respect of co-ordination to a noticeable difference in perception and approach between headquarters and the field. Conscious of the suspicions to which the project had given rise in preliminary consultations with agency headquarters, we proceeded with considerable caution. We thus developed for the purpose of exercises the profile of a fictional country. That approach was very soon swept away by participants who insisted in bringing into the discussion the very problems that they were facing in the real life of their country of assignment. The programme of the workshops evolved toward the preparation by each team of a country plan of action which would be taken back as a guideline for future activities. The pragmatism of a field culture of fruitful co-ordination had disposed of the reticence nurtured by a headquarters culture of defensive co-ordination !

## **65. Towards a United Nations Staff College**

As a last assignment before giving up all post-retirement professional activity, I headed in 1995 a feasibility study team of three persons on the establishment of a United Nations Staff College. The study was commissioned by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali himself. This gave me the rare opportunity of a personal meeting with the Secretary-General. It seems somehow that secretaries-general are quite distant in a career like mine. The only ones I more than just saw were Hammarskjöld in Palestine and in the Congo, and Waldheim whom I once received on behalf of UNEP in Nairobi during one of his African tours. And Kofi Annan, of course. When designated in 1973 Director of the Environment Fund, I had offered him to come and work with me in UNEP. But he had wisely declined. The others I have seen at a lunch table or at a reception during ACC meetings. I well remember the cordial and firm handshake of U Thant, but this hardly amounted to a personal exchange.

During our meeting, Boutros Ghali aired his deep frustration at his inability to move the bureaucratic structures of many of the activities of the United Nations. Uninformed or unwilling to take account of the complexity of the problems involved, he was then set on the idea of a merger between UNITAR and the Turin Centre of ILO. His vision of a United Nations Staff College was very much grafted in his mind on that idea. Our team jointly, and each of its members separately, undertook a considerable amount of consultations and discussions, both in Turin and at Headquarters of interested agencies. The experience of the Turin workshops loomed naturally rather large on our horizon throughout our mission. We finalized our

report in Turin in June 1995, signed by myself and the two members of the study team, Margaret Simon and Hugh Cholmondeley. The team therein expressed the view that the project of establishing a United Nations Staff College was viable and worthy of pursuing. We were conscious, on the other hand, of the fact that our findings were cast at a certain level of generality and expressed the hope that they could serve as a useful basis for the further consideration of the matter.

## **66. Retiring from professional activities**

Post-retirement professional activities had kept me fairly busy and filled quite a bit of my time since I had retired. I was approaching seventy-five years of age, when I had suddenly in 1996 a fairly strong feeling that I should disengage, both on the teaching side and on the consultancy side. The inner forces which led me to that conclusion were probably multiple.

For one, on the teaching side I got at that time the strange feeling of having to be careful not to end up on a list of *personnes attardées*. Part of my teaching had been heavily based on my experience in the United Nations and the observation of United Nations affairs.

Now, in the mid-1990's, I realized more and more that with the passing of time, some elements of my teaching were getting outdated. For instance, on techniques of negotiation I had up to the early 1990s devoted a full morning to explaining the functioning of a commodity agreement. But now no

commodity agreement negotiations were taking place, and there would be no opportunity for my audience to be involved in those techniques. So I had dropped that subject from my curriculum. The group system was still there, but was I still on course in what had to be said about its functioning, and was my experience in this respect still valid ? I had lost contact and I didn't know. It also was clear to me that younger people were at hand ready to take over the noble task of sharing and imparting knowledge. In Paris, Brussels and Turin, people had been found who would take over my teaching. I somehow felt that there was a time for everything. So I disengaged from teaching by declining at the end of 1996 UNITAR's offer of renewal of my appointment as Senior Special Fellow. Some people felt I did so somewhat abruptly. To those who kindly said I would be regretted, I pointed out that it would be rather sad to leave without being regretted !

The situation in respect of my consultancy work was not any different. The Turin Programme had been exhilarating and I had enthusiastically given it the best I could. The wear and tear of age started to take its toll on me, however, and I was afflicted with serious back pains which would only disappear a few years later following a major operation. I had been, after all, retired for over fourteen years. Time had come for another generation to take over. And people were available for the tasks to be undertaken. This I had noted already some time earlier in relation to my own situation. I mentioned above the experience of my last consultancy with ITC, after which several enquiries had been made with the Secretariat about my availability for further assignments as consultant. Those enquiries had all been forwarded to me with the indication that ITC would welcome a positive response on my part. Following my negative reply on

every one of them, ITC had realized that it had to turn to other people to satisfy those demands, and it had wisely ceased to approach me in respect of consultancy work.

My second retirement has not prevented me from trying to follow with great interest what is going on within the United Nations, but only very occasionally has this interest taken a concrete form. A public lecture in 2000 on Les Nations Unies : Pouvoir et idéologie, the text of which was published, and one page for the South Centre giving my comments on the Millenium Report have been the last pieces I produced worth mentioning. On the other hand, I did during nine years very closely follow developments in the question of Palestine and regularly write articles about it in the Swiss press. I have published those articles, together with a substantial introduction and epilogue, early in 2006 in a book entitled Palestine meurtrie, Eclairages sur une cause en détresse, 1997-2005.

## Epilogue

At the end of this journey back to my professional activity, I am left to reflect about the importance that the United Nations has had in my life. My loyalty to the Organization has been unfailing throughout my career, and this is something about which I am proud. Recognition does not always come one's way, nor is it to be expected. There has been one unsolicited instance, however, that has stuck in my memory. In UNCTAD, I had had for a long time as a close and dear colleague, Evgeni Chossudovsky, a Soviet citizen who had worked in the Palais des Nations in Geneva since the earlier days of the United Nations, first in the Economic Commission for Europe and later joining UNCTAD. He had been quite a figure on the Geneva scene and when he retired in 1979 the Swiss authorities organized a farewell lunch for him in Berne. I remember him coming back from the event, which had been hosted by the Department of Foreign Affairs, and telling me with some hesitancy what had happened to him. In the process of making conversation, he had mentioned during the lunch that he had worked closely in UNCTAD with one of their compatriots, Paul Berthoud. To which the senior official hosting the lunch had apparently rather snappily replied : "Oh yes, we know him well. But he has never been of any use to us." I reassured Chossudovsky that he should in no way see himself as a messenger of bad news. Unwittingly, that remark has been one of the greatest compliments I have ever received in my whole career as an international civil servant.

I should add that for loyalty to be sustained, It has also been necessary for me to keep at all times in mind the aphorism

attributed to Philippe de Seynes : "The major difficulty, with the United Nations, is that it became indispensable before it was possible". To serve the United Nations well, it is important to understand it for what it is, We have to be constantly aware of its two dimensions : an ideological framework that contains the germs of a world community, and an institutional structure that is still grounded in the power politics of the Nation States. The distance between those two dimensions is very great, and bringing them closer is what working for the United Nations is basically about.

With the passing of time and the privilege of idleness, I have perhaps been in a position to pay more attention than in the past to the evolution of that distance. Entering the arena at mid-Twentieth Century, I had great hopes and I felt for a while that our path was clear. The bi-polarity of the world, co-existence between liberal capitalism and socialism, and the struggle of the nascent Third World to find its place in this complexity, was the framework within which the gap between ideological framework and power politics should be narrowed. The failure and decomposition of the Second World dramatically altered that premise. Discarded the socialist alternative, triumphant capitalism filled the whole space. Rooted in selfishness and greed, intrinsically creating winners and losers, it has ensured its monolithic dominance of the World and of the United Nations.

As a lawyer, the legal scene is perhaps for me the more natural to turn to in order to take stock of the state of affairs in this respect. The progressive acceptance of the rule of law is undoubtedly an important way of furthering the principles and

objectives set out by the United Nations Charter. In this context, the development of an international justice is part of the heritage left by the Twentieth Century, and an advance in civilization. We see today, however, the International Court of Justice openly by-passed, vilified and disparaged by the one dominant super-power and its closest ally. Largely isolated in the world community, the United States has refused to this day to accept the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and negotiated exemption for United States citizens of the Court's jurisdiction. It has not ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and opposed the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of Cultural Diversity. Washington has rejected the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the Treaty Banning Anti-personnel Mines, a protocol to create a compliance regime for the Biological Weapons Convention, the Kyoto Protocol on Global Warming, and the Anti-Ballistic Missiles Treaty. It is not complying with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Commission and the United Nations framework Convention on Climate Change. Due to the towering position of the United States both in the world at large and in the United Nations, it is the World community as a whole which is unable to register today the advances which would bring us closer to compliance with the ideological framework of the Charter.

I thus consider it only realistic to note that in many respects, the distance between ideological framework and power politics is in the United Nations today greater than it was twenty years ago. This being said, I remain firmly of the view that narrowing that distance can be said to embody the *raison d'être* of working for the United Nations. There is for the coming generations no alternative but to go on toiling in that direction. And if as we

did, they should sometimes feel that the task is daunting, they should remember, as we did, the graffiti on the walls of the Sorbonne in May 1968 : "Soyez réalistes, rêvez !"

**Geneva, December 2008**